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## Editorial

# CODESRIA at Fifty: Surviving the Storm

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The 16<sup>th</sup> CODESRIA General Assembly is set to take place from Monday, 4 to 8 December 2023, marking a pivotal moment in the history of the Council because it also commemorates its fiftieth anniversary. Founded in 1973, CODESRIA has grown immensely and blossomed into a premier social science research institution in Africa, significantly shaping African intellectual thought and re-asserting African voices in global discussions on a range of key thematic areas. It has become the reference institution for many on the continent, nurturing scholars and bestowing upon them a standing in academia that surpasses most others.

The fifty-year journey to transform CODESRIA into a standard-bearer for African intellectual production has not been easy. Unique challenges have emerged, stemming from the tribulations one encounters when seeking to build a research organisation in Africa. Unlike other places in the world, the continent has not prioritised creating conducive environments and frameworks for nurturing institutions of science, in particular, and knowledge production, in general. For those, like CODESRIA's first Executive Secretary, Samir Amin, who shouldered the responsibility of giving birth to this institution, using existing networks and personal relationships, including the 'old boys' network', may not have been a preferred choice but was perhaps the only suitable option available to them.

There is no doubt, however, that the challenge of institutionalising CODESRIA, avidly undertaken by, among others Abdalla Bujra and Thandika Mkan-dawire, was facilitated by their resolve and commitment. This was a commitment of founders, of creative thinkers who not only understood the short-term need but could at the same time forecast a longer-term agenda. They encountered and survived a range of storms, some natural and others man-made, some internal and others external to the continent. The institutionalisation of CODESRIA was unimaginable to some, since

a huge cohort of African students had been trained abroad, thereby convincing the doubters that the task of creating an epistemic community was possible only via training in Western institutions of learning.

Thus, the idea of a Council founded, organised, managed and run by Africans often felt like an impossibility. Nonetheless, CODESRIA has skilfully navigated a complex terrain, facing hot and cold wars waged by so-called 'friends of Africa' who self-identified as specialists and experts in African studies and whose journey of discovering Africa and claiming 'spheres of influence' over different countries or regions was threatened by the vigorous and unapologetic perspectives advanced by scholars convened by the Council. CODESRIA's pivotal work on a democracy, for instance, that advanced the state–society relationship as critical to thinking about power and politics in Africa, was finely framed in Mahmood Mamdani's *'A Glimpse at African Studies, Made in the USA'* (Mamdani 1990: 7–11)<sup>1</sup>. On issues of development, one can contrast the work on the democratic, developmental state to the epithet-filled analyses framed using notions of neopatrimonialism.

A critical part of the challenge was ideological. The founders of CODESRIA envisioned a decolonised idea of Africa liberated from colonial influences and defined rather by a pan-African agenda woven by cross-cutting solidarities that transcended racial, gender and class distinctions. This vision of Africa clashed with prevailing perspectives within African studies that prioritised a colonial library and divided Africa cartographically into the south and north of the Sahara. In other words, the history of CODESRIA to date has been the history of a clash between an invented Africa and an Africa of the lived experiences of many Africans. CODESRIA has positioned itself to understand the lived experiences of Africans and committed to interventions that give voice to those experiences.

It is for this reason that the convening of the 16th CODESRIA General Assembly alongside the ‘celebration’, to borrow Ayi Kwei Armah’s fine phrasing, of its fiftieth anniversary represents a major milestone.<sup>2</sup> If one of the ambitions of CODESRIA’s founders was to support the emergence of a vibrant community of scholarship that gave voice to the lived experiences of Africans, then the Council has made significant strides in making this possible. Along this journey, it became evident that CODESRIA could never thrive if it was the sole luminary in a vast continent of perpetually curious people holding rich knowledge traditions of enviable value. The founders understood that CODESRIA needed other scholarly networks not only to complement its work in knowledge production but also to position Africans as key players in the continent’s policy engagement initiatives.

In pursuit of this goal, the Council hosted a few institutions in its secretariat. It also deliberately offered support to several academic networks in Africa, aiming to enhance their reach, complement the Council’s work and facilitate the urgent task of growing epistemic communities in Africa. The Council might not have come to the task of building an epistemic with the intentionality required of that exercise, but an epistemic community started emerging on a range of key thematic questions. Indeed, the Council’s leadership and key members also took the opportunity to facilitate the founding of sister organisations. Regrettably, not all of these organisations survived beyond three decades, reflecting the historically low life expectancy of African social science and humanities organisations. That CODESRIA has survived to its fiftieth year stands as a significant milestone.

CODESRIA has nurtured a community of scholarship whose work has been evident through the various programmes it runs. This impact is also evident in the vibrancy of its membership and the generational succession processes to which it gave birth. Despite the challenges, the Council has endured, a testament of the unwavering commitment of its members and the institution’s tradition of adopting self-correcting measures during difficult times. This resilience has been particularly evident in periods of adversity, proving instrumental during the onset of the pandemic and the various intrusive audits mandated between 2020 and 2022.

The Council, therefore, has every reason to celebrate. The best platform for this celebration is the 16th CODESRIA General Assembly, a platform that has grown into the largest gathering of the African social sciences communities every three years. In this General Assembly, we have brought together close to 350 delegates from at least 42 countries within Africa and beyond and it is my distinct honour to welcome our diverse community to Dakar, Senegal. It is also our honour to host a range of partners, the diplomatic community in Dakar and university leaders who accepted our invitation.

To kick off this engagement, the Council has prepared a special issue of the *CODESRIA Bulletin* for the 16th General Assembly and another one for the fiftieth anniversary. The variety of reflections in No 3/4, 2023 reflect on the history of the Council and provide testimony to the trials, travails and tribulations of growing a knowledge institution while also celebrating the triumphs. For No. 5/6, 2023, various contributors illuminate the theme of the Assembly, using case studies drawn across the continent. We hope that this collection of articles will give readers a sense of the journey travelled and the ideas that will illuminate this Assembly.

## Notes

1. Mahmood Mamdani, A Glimpse at African Studies, Made in the USA, *CODESRIA Bulletin*, No 2, 1990, pp. 7–11.
2. As cited in Mshai S. Mwangola, Nurturing the Fourth Generation: Defining the Historical Mission for Our Generation, *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, 2008, p. 7.

**Godwin R. Murunga**  
Executive Secretary,  
CODESRIA



## Éditorial

# CODESRIA à cinquante ans : survivre à la tempête

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La 16<sup>e</sup> Assemblée générale du CODESRIA se tiendra du 4 au 8 décembre 2023. C'est un moment charnière dans l'histoire du Conseil car elle coïncide également avec son cinquantième anniversaire. Fondé en 1973, le CODESRIA a considérablement grandi et est devenu une institution de recherche en sciences sociales de premier plan en Afrique, institution qui, de manière significative, influence la pensée intellectuelle africaine, et réaffirme les voix africaines dans les discussions mondiales sur des domaines thématiques clés. Pour de nombreuses personnes sur le continent, le CODESRIA est devenu l'institution de référence, formatrice d'universitaires, leur conférant ainsi une position universitaire qui surpasse beaucoup d'autres.

Ce périple de cinquante ans qui a fait du CODESRIA un porte-étendard de la production intellectuelle africaine n'a pas été de tout repos. Sont apparus des défis uniques, résultant des tribulations de la construction d'une organisation de recherche en Afrique. Contrairement à d'autres parties du monde, le continent n'a pas priorisé la création d'environnements et de cadres propices au développement d'institutions scientifiques, en particulier, et à la production de connaissances, en général. Pour ceux qui, comme Samir Amin, le premier Secrétaire exécutif du CODESRIA, ont porté cette institution sur les fonds baptismaux, l'utilisation de relations et réseaux personnels existants, y compris la bande de « bons copains », n'était peut-être pas un choix judicieux, mais c'était peut-être la seule option appropriée qui s'offrait à eux.

Il ne fait cependant aucun doute que le défi de l'institutionnalisation du CODESRIA, porté avec enthousiasme par Abdalla Bujra et Thandika Mkandawire, entre autres, a été facilité par leur détermination et leur engagement. ; cet engagement des fondateurs, de penseurs créatifs qui non seulement comprenaient les besoins à court terme, mais pouvaient en même temps prévoir un agenda à plus

long terme. Ils ont fait face et survécu à une série de tempêtes, certaines naturelles, d'autres provoquées par l'homme, certaines internes et d'autres externes au continent. L'institutionnalisation du CODESRIA était inimaginable pour certains, une importante cohorte d'étudiants africains ayant été formée à l'étranger, entraînant ainsi les sceptiques dans l'idée que la tâche de création d'une communauté épistémique n'était possible qu'à travers une formation dans des institutions occidentales d'enseignement.

Ainsi, l'idée d'un Conseil fondé, organisé, géré et dirigé par des Africains semblait, à certains moments, impossible. Néanmoins, le CODESRIA a su manœuvrer sur un terrain complexe, confronté aux guerres chaudes et froides menées par les soi-disant « amis de l'Afrique », autoproclamés spécialistes et experts en études africaines, et dont le voyage de découverte de l'Afrique et de revendication de « sphères d'influence » sur différents pays ou régions était contrarié par les perspectives vigoureuses et décomplexées avancées par les universitaires appelés à contribution par le Conseil. Par exemple, l'important travail du CODESRIA sur la démocratie qui a fait de la relation État-société un élément essentiel de la réflexion sur le pouvoir et la politique en Afrique, a été parfaitement saisi dans le travail de Mahmood Mamdani, *A Glimpse at African Studies, Made in the USA* (Mamdani 1990 : 7–11)<sup>1</sup>. Sur les questions de développement, on peut opposer les travaux sur l'État démocratique et développementaliste aux analyses pleines de qualificatifs appuyés sur des notions de néopatrimonialisme.

Une part essentielle du défi était idéologique. Les fondateurs du CODESRIA envisageaient une Afrique libérée des influences coloniales, et au contraire, définie par un agenda panafricain parcouru de solidarités transversales qui transcendent les distinctions de race, de genre et de classe. Cette vision de l'Afrique se heurtait aux perspectives dominantes dans les

études africaines qui donnaient la priorité à une bibliothèque coloniale, et procédaient d'une division cartographique de l'Afrique entre sud et nord du Sahara. En d'autres termes, l'histoire du CODESRIA jusqu'à présent a été celle d'un choc entre une Afrique inventée et une Afrique des expériences vécues par de nombreux Africains. Le CODESRIA s'est positionné dans la compréhension des expériences vécues par les Africains et s'est engagé sur des interventions qui donnent une voix à ces expériences.

Pour cette raison, la tenue concomitante de la 16<sup>e</sup> Assemblée générale du CODESRIA et la «célébration», pour reprendre la belle formule d'Ayi Kwei Armah, de son cinquantième anniversaire représentent une étape majeure<sup>2</sup>. Si l'une des ambitions des fondateurs du CODESRIA était de soutenir le l'émergence d'une communauté universitaire dynamique qui donne la parole aux expériences vécues par les Africains, le Conseil a fait des progrès significatifs pour sa concrétisation. Au cours de ce voyage, il est devenu évident que le CODESRIA ne prospérerait jamais en tant qu'unique figure dans un vaste continent peuplé de personnes toujours curieuses et porteuses de riches traditions de connaissances d'une valeur qu'on lui enviait. Les fondateurs ont compris que le CODESRIA avait besoin d'autres réseaux universitaires, non seulement dans la poursuite de son travail de production de connaissances, mais aussi dans le positionnement des Africains en tant qu'acteurs clés dans les initiatives d'engagement politique du continent.

Dans la poursuite de cet objectif, le Conseil a hébergé des institutions dans son secrétariat. Il a également délibérément offert son soutien à plusieurs réseaux universitaires en Afrique, dans le but d'accroître leur portée, de prolonger le travail du Conseil et de faciliter la tâche urgente de développement de communautés épistémiques en Afrique. Le Conseil n'a peut-être pas réussi à construire une épistémologie avec l'intentionnalité requise par cet exercice, mais une communauté épistémique émerge sur une série de questions thématiques clés. En effet, les dirigeants et les membres du Conseil en ont également profité pour faciliter la création d'organisations-sœurs. Malheureusement, aucune n'a survécu plus de trois décennies, reflet de l'espérance de vie historiquement basse des organisations africaines en sciences sociales et humaines. Que le CODESRIA fête son cinquantième anniversaire constitue un jalon important.

Le CODESRIA a développé une communauté de chercheurs dont le travail est visible dans ses différents programmes. Cet impact se manifeste également dans le dynamisme de ses membres et dans les processus de relève générationnelle qu'il engendre. Malgré les défis, le Conseil a tenu bon, ce qui témoigne de l'engagement inébranlable de ses membres et de la tradition institutionnelle d'adoption de mesures d'autocorrection dans les moments difficiles. Cette résilience a été particulièrement évidente dans les périodes d'adversité, s'avérant déterminante au début de la pandémie et dans les divers audits intrusifs mandatés entre 2020 et 2022.

Le Conseil a donc toutes les raisons de se féliciter. La meilleure plateforme pour cette célébration est la 16<sup>e</sup> Assemblée générale du CODESRIA, plateforme qui est devenue le plus grand rassemblement triennal des communautés africaines des sciences sociales. A cette Assemblée générale, nous avons réuni près de 350 délégués d'au moins 42 pays d'Afrique et d'ailleurs, et c'est un grand honneur pour moi d'accueillir notre communauté diverse à Dakar, au Sénégal. C'est également un honneur pour nous d'accueillir les nombreux partenaires, la communauté diplomatique de Dakar et les dirigeants universitaires qui ont accepté notre invitation.

Pour lancer cet événement, le Conseil a préparé un numéro spécial du *Bulletin du CODESRIA* pour la 16<sup>e</sup> Assemblée générale et un autre pour le cinquantième anniversaire. Les réflexions du numéro 3/4, 2023 portent sur l'histoire du Conseil et témoignent des épreuves, des difficultés et des tribulations liées au développement d'une institution de savoirs, tout en célébrant ses succès. Les divers contributeurs du numéro 5/6, 2023 éclairent le thème de l'Assemblée générale, à partir d'études de cas tirées de tout le continent. Nous espérons que cette collection d'articles donnera aux lecteurs un aperçu du chemin parcouru et des réflexions qui guident cette Assemblée générale.

## Notes

1. Mahmood Mamdani, A Glimpse at African Studies, Made in the USA, *Bulletin du CODESRIA*, No. 2, 1990, pp. 7–11.
2. Comme cité dans Mshāi S. Mwangola, Nurturing the Fourth Generation: Defining the Historical Mission for Our Generation, *Afrique & Développement*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, 2008, p. 7.

**Godwin R. Murunga**  
Secrétaire exécutif  
CODESRIA

## Fifty Golden Cheers to a Venerable African Institution

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It is almost unbelievable, but it is true that the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) turned fifty in 2023! Considering the mass turnover of similar scientific organisations in Africa, as elsewhere in the world, it is a significant feat worth chronicling and celebrating that CODESRIA has not only survived but actually thrived over the years since it was founded in 1973 to qualify as an embedded and venerable institution in the higher education terrain and policy context of the continent. That the Council has been successful in weathering hard times, including the tough days that characterised its foundational years, and navigating good times, especially as external funders began to grow more interested in its work, to achieve steady growth, redress mid-life challenges, nurture its independence, advance critical scholarship and defend the academic freedom of scholars under various conditions is not, by any measure, a small achievement. For this reason, as we celebrate this milestone in the life of the Council, we must renew our debt of immeasurable and eternal gratitude to the founding generation of members, leaders and staff who established the solid foundation of engagement, sacrifice and service on which subsequent generations have strived to build.

**Adebayo O. Olukoshi**

Chair,  
CODESRIA  
Scientific Committee  
& Distinguished Professor,  
Wits University

Looking back on the last fifty years, and with the singular honour and privilege of having led the CODESRIA Secretariat from 2001 to 2009, I can affirm with confidence that there are no other continental and sub-regional institutions that have matched the Council in the promotion of basic social research, support for inter/multi/transdisciplinary studies, encouragement of intergenerational conversations, advancement of gender studies, investments in next-generation scholars and documentation and dissemination of knowledge, among other domains of active programming and network-building that respond to the changing context of advanced scholarship across the continent. The agility that the Council has displayed even as it has adapted itself to changing times over the past half-century will, undoubtedly, see it through the next fifty years and beyond.

Gazing into the future, and with the ongoing shifts in the global order in mind, the next generation of CODESRIA members will face the dual challenge of keeping the flag of

scholarly excellence and integrity hoisted high whilst simultaneously exploring new avenues and strategies for consolidating institutional autonomy. I am particularly keen on the task of ensuring that the funding base of the Council is deliberately developed to significantly cut back on the proportion of external, extra-African support that, among some long-standing partners previously known for their understanding of the role of global solidarity, has become increasingly burdensome to the point of being regressive. CODESRIA members must wake up to the threat posed to the long-term future of their cherished organisation by a new regime of cooperation anchored on managerial authoritarianism or weaponised to serve narrow geopolitical objectives. It is a regime that does not see the *raison d'être* of associations, networks and agencies such as CODESRIA. It deserves to be exposed for what it is and resisted accordingly.

Happy Golden Jubilee to CODESRIA staff and members! I earnestly look forward to the celebration of the Council's Diamond Jubilee as a proud child of the organisation in its yesteryears, an emerging elder of the community today and a permanent militant for the cause of independent African scholarship that the Council so eminently embodies. May the Council flourish into its centennial and beyond!

# Reflections on CODESRIA After Fifty Years: Change, Turmoil and Progress in Society and the Social Sciences

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## The Foundation of CODESRIA and Its Mission: A Personal Reflection

In 1973, as I was finishing my PhD dissertation proposal on ‘Coffee Production in Ivory Coast and Kenya: Capital and Labour in Post-Colonial Political Systems in Africa’, in the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago, I had a combination of professors in my committee who were a very good mix for the kind of advice I needed. Their own research and fields of teaching were in the politics of development, class interests and class conflicts and the character of development and underdevelopment in Africa.

From the writings and teachings of Aristide Zolberg on *One-Party Government in Ivory Coast*, I came to the conclusion that the agricultural revolutions from colonial times in Kenya and Côte d’Ivoire (then, Ivory Coast) were comparable. No wonder they both emerged after independence with strong, presidential authoritarian systems as one-party states. But to what extent was the agricultural bourgeoisie in coffee production in the two countries the sinew that stitched together the class alliances to form stable political systems after independence?

I finally redefined the problematic of my thesis as the study of what Marxist political economy

Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o

Professor of Political  
Science and Governor of  
Kisumu County, Kenya

called ‘an articulation of modes of production’ in coffee farming in Kenya and Côte d’Ivoire.<sup>1</sup> It was interesting to note that, at the outset of capitalist coffee farming, white male owners of the farms – Englishmen in Kenya and Frenchmen in Côte d’Ivoire – both used forced labour (*travail forcé*) to compel Africans to work on their farms. This became costly, unpredictable and politically volatile, as their colonial civil servants observed. A process of appeasing labour and incorporating ‘political hotheads’ into the profit-making game was necessary. However, complicated the tools and machines of production are, in the final analysis labour is vital in setting production in motion. Voluntary and enthusiastic labour, needing no expensive supervision and treating ‘the farm’ as their own, has always been vital in capitalist agriculture. This is what historically distinguishes agriculture based on slave labour from agriculture based on paid labour. How did this process manifest itself ‘historically’ in both Kenya and Côte d’Ivoire, and

how did it lead to the emergence of nationalist political parties with strong support from both the peasantry and the working class?

In the end I narrowed down my research and the writing of my thesis to Cote d’Ivoire. To this day I have never published the thesis but it provided me with a strong foundation for my later work. This move was greatly influenced by my stay in Dakar at the UN Institute for Development and Economic Planning (IDEP), which was at that time directed by the well-known African political economist, Samir Amin. I thought that staying at IDEP as a visiting fellow would give me an opportunity to have a clearer picture of the political economy of agriculture in West Africa. And it did. I enthusiastically read Samir Amin’s books on West Africa, such as *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa*, originally published in French as *Afrique de L’Ouest Bloquée*.<sup>2</sup> I participated in various conferences and seminars, which covered theoretical and practical research issues on the political economy of Africa and the developing world. But more than this, I met two people who were there, literally in two offices ‘in the ribs of IDEP’, to start a new research entity specifically for social science research and intellectual development, called the Council for the Development for Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). These two



people were Professor Abdala Boujra from Kenya and Thandika Mkandawire from Malawi.

Samir Amin knew and realised that IDEP was a UN entity, not an African one. We Africans needed something authentic and African, from its very foundation, for the African social sciences community to feel at home with and where they could do their own original thinking and research, which would take the place of IDEP when people like Samir were no longer there. This was a wonderful idea, and I am glad I was there at the creation and birth of CODESRIA and the tail end of the glory of IDEP. CODESRIA lives to this very day and my *séjour* in Dakar gave me a very good opportunity to clarify my mind on what I was going to do in Côte d'Ivoire. Since then, I have continued to be a member of CODESRIA, take part in conferences and working groups, share ideas and experiences with fellow African scholars, publish articles and books together and build what can be called 'a community of African social scientists', the way the founding fathers – Samir Amin, Abdala Boujra and Thandika Mkandawire – envisaged it.

### **CODESRIA'S Vision and Mission Today**

CODESRIA defines its vision and mission as building a strong and vibrant African social science and humanities research community. It serves to mobilise researchers and scholars from various disciplines to share experiences, ideas and publications through its many research groups, training programmes and so on. In large part, its avant-garde publications, *Africa Development* and the *Bulletin*, have become the rallying

point for African scholarly exchange of ideas on development, social conflicts and the challenges that face African people and states.

### **CODESRIA in the Period of Change and Turmoil**

We must note, however, that the nature and character of intellectual and academic work and research has been changing radically in our institutions of higher learning, particularly in universities, in Africa. Universities in Africa are largely state-owned and state-run – that is. they are public institutions. What affects the state, and the kind of output the state expects from them, affects the kind of personnel they recruit and retain.

As 'left-leaning academics', which we were in the seventies, however much the students loved what we were teaching them the university authorities and the state regarded us as a thorn in the flesh. Very soon we faced political harassment; some of us were quite often arrested and detained, or finally forced to flee our countries to take up teaching and research in foreign institutions. The late Professor Micere Githae Mugo, of the literature department at the University of Nairobi, ended up working in the US from the early eighties. I left the University of Nairobi in 1981, ostensibly to go to El Colegio de Mexico on sabbatical. but never to be allowed back again at my home university.

During all this time CODESRIA remained our umbilical cord, connecting us with our colleagues in social science research and teaching, through its conferences, working groups, workshops and scholarly exchange programmes with such institutions as the UN University.

While in academic and political exile in Mexico, it was CODESRIA and IDEP that helped me maintain contact and a political community with my fellow African scholars. I must confess that without this sustaining umbilical cord, I would not have had the opportunity to lead a CODESRIA Working Group of leading African scholars who studied popular resistance to authoritarian regimes in Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Liberia, Swaziland and Ghana, which led to the publication of *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa* (1987),<sup>3</sup> of which I was the editor.

I could also mention some of my other publications that I can link to discussions and exchanges within the CODESRIA network, such as 'What the friends of the peasants say and how they pose the question of the peasantry' (2007).<sup>4</sup> The so-called 'CODESRIA Debate', ignited by an article I had written in the CODESRIA journal, *Africa Development*, in 1988,<sup>5</sup> attracted a sharp discussion involving Issa Shivji, Shadrack Gutto and Thandika Mkandawire, both in the *Bulletin* and the journal. Thandika's erudite article, 'Comments on Democracy and Political Instability'<sup>6</sup> (1988) would be very appropriate reading today in the context of the military coups in West Africa.

CODESRIA has gone much further in institutional development by creating training, grants and fellowship programmes to support the development of dissertation proposals, research skills, publications and continuous intellectual discourse. Doing this at a time when the space for the social sciences is becoming narrower in African universities, CODESRIA has created an invaluable opportunity to sustain critical

research and publications, as well as quality of teaching where some limited opportunity may still be available.

Social science departments in our universities have become much more consultancy-oriented than before. Contract research, focused on what is usually justified as 'policy relevance', takes a good chunk of time from our scholars. It may very well be that such research actually helps policy-makers in government to make good policies. Well and good. But the 'gold rush' mentality that it creates within certain faculties in our universities may be harmful to the time devoted by scholars to such 'social value' issues as social inequality, political oppression, gender discrimination, cultural integrity, the integrity of creation and climate change.

### CODESRIA'S Achievements

One of CODESRIA's major achievements is that it has created an 'escape route' for scholars who are interested in developing research skills and research methodologies without being tied down to the consultancy culture. The Institute on Democratic Governance plays a key role in this year after year. So do other training programmes that bring together graduate students to work on dissertation proposals.

Conferences provide opportunities for scholars to exchange ideas, discuss theories and analyse on-

going political and socioeconomic changes in Africa. The series of military coups that have occurred in former French colonies in West Africa should elicit a new look at the coup, perhaps as a failure of authoritarian regimes trying to legitimise themselves through the façade of elections. Elections, by themselves, do not constitute a democratic process, nor can they necessarily lead to voters electing their rulers 'freely and fairly', where 'rules of the game' predetermine who will be elected.

Military coups and the challenges to democratic governance are a subject that CODESRIA could give fresh focus to in discourses and research, because such coups are likely to mushroom in Africa. Condemning military coups as anathema to democracy is a moral stand, not a useful formulation of the problem.

### Conclusion

My reflections are an appreciation of CODESRIA'S work since its inception fifty years ago and serve to point out further challenges to this very important social science and humanities research and discussion forum, which is bound to be the home of Africa's social scientists, now and into the future. They also record my own personal appreciation of what I have contributed to and gained from CODESRIA.

### Notes

1. By 'articulation of modes of production' I did not simply mean the mechanical or practical activity called 'coffee farming', but the social relationships engendered and necessary in producing coffee and transferring surplus values from actual workers to the so-called owners of farms or the rural bourgeoisie – *without any duress* – justified as their 'profits' or rewards for owning land. See, for example, Archie Mafeje's writings on land and agrarian issues in tropical Africa.
2. Samir Amin, 1974, *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
3. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, ed., 1987, *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, London: Zed Books.
4. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, 2007, 'What the friends of the peasants say and how they pose the question of the peasantry', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 8, Issue 20, pp. 17–26.
5. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, 1988, 'Political Instability and the Prospects for Democracy in Africa', *Africa Development*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 71–85.
6. Thandika Mkandawire, 1988, 'Comments on Democracy and Political Instability', *Africa Development*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 77–82.

## Empowering African Voices: CODESRIA's Role in Shaping an African Agenda for Knowledge Production

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The establishment of CODESRIA's mandate in 1973 marked a significant milestone in the history of African intellectual and academic development. Over the course of fifty years, CODESRIA has not only thrived but also contributed to shaping the intellectual landscape on the African continent. This journey has been a testament to the resilience, dedication and vision of its founders, who navigated challenges and seized opportunities in the evolving landscape of knowledge production and dissemination.

The Council's mandate encompassed the mobilisation of the African social research community, encouraging comparative research with a pan-African perspective, promoting the publication of research output and defending the principles of independent thought and research. Moreover, it fostered cooperation between African universities and research organisations and established international connections, highlighting the institution's commitment to pan-Africanism and scholarly freedom.

We should remember that the establishment of CODESRIA occurred in a complex historical context, when Africa was emerging

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from colonial rule and transitioning to independence. The post-independence period was marked by political changes and the emergence of military and single-party regimes across the continent. These shifts posed challenges to the state-academy relationship and led to a gradual deterioration of academic freedom.

The international context of knowledge production in Africa was characterised by the colonial legacy, which limited the influence of African scholars and promoted external intellectual agendas. The Council was established as a response to these challenges, aiming to champion African scholarship, connect scholars and create a network for the dissemination of information in the social sciences. It also had to navigate issues related to language barriers, geographic isolation and a decline in funding for higher education, which further reinforced its role in fostering academic freedom and publishing African research.

Over the years, CODESRIA has played a pivotal role in advancing the cause of African scholarship. The institution has invested in promoting multidisciplinary and comparative research, nurturing younger generations of scholars and breaking down linguistic and geographical barriers to knowledge production. Its support for scholarly publishing and research initiatives, along with its focus on gender integration, has further enriched the African academic landscape.

Despite the economic challenges faced by African universities in the 1980s and 1990s, CODESRIA's programmes and publications provided an alternative to mainstream knowledge production, offering a platform for scholars to address critical issues on the continent. The Council's commitment to academic freedom, mentoring and connecting generations of scholars has made it a cornerstone in the development of African intellectual stance. I have been a privileged participant of this journey.

My first encounters with CODESRIA date back to the early 1980s, when I embarked on a mission to strengthen Guinea-Bissau's post-independence research institutional set-up. At that time, I sought the guidance

and support of prominent scholars like Samir Amin and Thandika Mkandawire. Their mentorship and the partnership with CODESRIA played a pivotal role in shaping my academic journey and the success of the new institution I was trying to establish in post-independence Guinea-Bissau. As we celebrate CODESRIA's fiftieth anniversary, it is essential to reflect on the organisation's remarkable achievements and its personal significance in my life.

One of CODESRIA's most notable accomplishments is its pioneering role in the production and dissemination of research publications. The organisation has been a driving force behind the creation of journals, monographs and books that have contributed significantly to the understanding of African social sciences. In my own journey, this support was instrumental in the establishment and growth of the National Institute for Studies and Research (INEP) in Guinea-Bissau. I founded INEP in 1984 and was its first director until late 1988. The partnership with CODESRIA allowed us to develop a robust academic publishing programme, with a biannual journal and numerous monographs, that helped INEP become a prominent research institution within Lusophone African countries.

CODESRIA's commitment to fostering a sense of pan-Africanism among scholars is another remarkable achievement. My journey, for instance, was greatly enriched by my connection with Mario de Andrade, the first President of the Angolan MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola). Andrade's unique trajectory, as a prominent pan-Africanist and biographer of Amilcar Cabral, introduced me to

a strong network of like-minded individuals. It was through this network, facilitated by Andrade and supported by CODESRIA, that I gained access to a wide-reaching pan-African community. This network became invaluable in my ongoing efforts to contribute to the policy agenda of the African continent in the various leadership positions I have occupied, in international organisations and in academia.

A memorable colloquium on nation-building is etched in my memory, where luminaries like Samir Amin, Thandika Mkandawire, Mario de Andrade and many others gathered in Bissau to discuss a key topic for young scholars in a newly independent country. This event, organised by INEP, exemplified CODESRIA's role in fostering intellectual engagement, not only through formal academic activities but also through critical discussions on pressing issues. On another occasion, I was happy to deliver CODESRIA's prestigious Cheikh Anta Diop lecture, during one of its assemblies, on the trajectory of Mario de Andrade. In fact, I am proud to be the only African scholar who has delivered such a lecture twice.

The organisation's advocacy for the decolonisation of African research has been instrumental in reshaping the academic landscape. My own institution, INEP, benefited from this approach. The principle that consultancy would finance academic research, which we introduced, was met with strong support from CODESRIA. This innovative model allowed INEP to enjoy a high degree of autonomy within the state apparatus, ultimately contributing to the institution's growth and success.

CODESRIA's enduring support for emerging scholars is yet another achievement that has left an indelible mark on my academic journey. This support includes mentorship, research grants and resources to nurture the talents of young African researchers. My professional life began as Mario de Andrade's assistant, acting as his private librarian. His constant support of my career helped me construct what was then considered a unique institutional success story in a poor country, in part due to the pan-African network facilitated by CODESRIA. INEP set the stage for the fruitful academic career of a significant number of individuals.

The collective efforts of individuals like Thandika Mkandawire, Adebayo Olukoshi, Ebrima Sall and Godwin Murunga, among others, have had a profound influence in shaping the African social sciences.

Beyond academia, CODESRIA has played a pivotal role in influencing policy change. The organisation's research findings and evidence-based advocacy have contributed to shaping policies that address critical issues in Africa. My collaboration with Adebayo Olukoshi started when he was leading CODESRIA. I later became his supervisor when he was Director of the Institute for Development and Economic Planning (IDEP). IDEP, created by Samir Amin and affiliated to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), which I led from 2012 to 2016, illustrates the ability to bridge the gap between academic research and policy-making. This engagement at the intersection of research and policy has been a driving force for meaningful change on the continent. It is fair to say that IDEP always remained a sister organisation to CODESRIA.



On the editorial boards of CODESRIA publications, as a member of the Scientific Committee and in my role of sustaining donor support for the organisation, I have witnessed the impact of the organisation's achievements in nurturing an extensive network of scholars across the continent. I was happy to launch the *Journal of African Transformation* with Ebrima Sall, when I was at ECA, as a testimony of this recognition.

Research in Africa faces several challenges that need to be addressed while affirming African agency and the right to construct alternative epistemologies. Firstly, there is a historical legacy of Western-centric research paradigms that have often marginalised and exoticised African knowledge systems. Researchers in Africa are grappling with the need to decolonise research methodologies and incorporate indigenous perspectives. African scholars are working to promote the recognition of their own epistemologies, which may differ significantly from Western paradigms, and ensure that

their contributions are valued and integrated into global knowledge.

Secondly, limited access to resources and infrastructure poses a significant hurdle for research in Africa. Inadequate funding, underdeveloped academic institutions and the brain drain of talented scholars to more economically developed regions have hindered the continent's ability to conduct high-quality research. Building research capacity, improving infrastructure and fostering international collaborations are essential steps to address these challenges and empower African researchers to construct alternative epistemologies that reflect their unique experiences and challenges.

Lastly, research in Africa is often driven by external agendas, which can undermine African agency in shaping research priorities and methods. It is vital for African scholars and institutions to take the lead in defining their research questions and methods, ensuring that research serves the needs and aspirations of the continent. African

agency in research is crucial for the construction of alternative epistemologies that are grounded in the realities and contexts of the region, fostering a more equitable and inclusive global knowledge landscape.

In conclusion, CODESRIA's fifty-year journey is a testament to its remarkable achievements and its enduring impact on African social science research and intellectual engagement. Its role in publishing, fostering pan-Africanism, advocating for the decolonisation of African research and for meaningful policy change on the continent, supporting emerging scholars and bridging the gap between academia and policy-making are achievements that are deeply interwoven with my personal and professional life.

As we celebrate this significant milestone, we must recognise CODESRIA's pivotal role in advancing African scholarship. Its legacy continues to inspire, shape and empower scholars and institutions across Africa.

 

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## Codesria : cinquante ans déjà ou seulement, mais une existence tonitruante et une fécondité rajeunissante

**C**odesria : une découverte, une rencontre providentielle pour moi et tant d'autres chercheur-e-s !

Codesria : déjà cinquante ans, soit un demi-siècle d'existence, à la fois mère, père et aîné-e !

Codesria : l'éclaireur-se ! Quel admirable parcours pour une institution à la fois si jeune et si vieille, mais sans doute mature et au sommet de son art pour répondre aux défis du continent africain.

Codesria : à la fois mère, père et aîné-e ! Tu as engendré tant de chercheur-e-s africain-e-s durant tes cinquante années d'existence extraordinaire ! Jeune et vieux/vieille, mère-père-aîné-e en même temps, tu es tout simplement à l'occasion de ton cinquantième anniversaire, d'âge mûr, mais continuant à grandir, toujours et encore plus fécond-e.

Beaucoup de gens, de chercheur-e-s notamment, pourraient, mieux que moi, écrire ta belle histoire, l'histoire de ton existence riche et féconde. Alors, je ne m'y risquerai pas. Je tiens juste à dire que, pour moi, tu es tout simplement l'aîné-e ! l'aîné-e des institutions panafricaines vouées au développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique.

### Bakary Doucouré

Socio-anthropologue,  
enseignant-chercheur,  
Université Gaston-Berger de  
Saint-Louis, Sénégal

Respect donc et hommage à toi l'aîné-e !

À la fois grand frère et grande sœur, car je ne connais pas ton sexe ; au temps pour moi, je veux dire ton genre ! tant tous les genres trouvent leur place en ton sein. Mais quel sein me dira-t-on ? La membrane nourricière ou l'intérieur ? Les deux sans doute ! Mais, encore plus grand-mère et grand-père, tant ta sagesse est incommensurable. J'ai tant appris avec toi, tant reçu de toi à l'instar de milliers de chercheurs d'Afrique et de la diaspora, au cours de tes cinq décennies d'existence.

Tu nous as donné notre notoriété scientifique, en nous offrant des possibilités de publication dans tes nombreuses revues à dimension internationale dont l'illustre *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement*.

Tu as renforcé notre réseau professionnel en nous mettant au contact de centaines, voire de milliers de chercheurs, dans les quatre coins du monde.

Tu nous as offert nos premières bourses et allocations de recherche et tant d'opportunités scientifiques et professionnelles à travers tes assemblées générales, tes colloques, tes instituts, tes ateliers de formation et tant d'autres types d'activités et d'événements.

Tu as tant éclairé et éveillé nos esprits et nos consciences sur tant de questions et de problématiques qui interpellent l'Afrique, l'Humanité, sur le plan scientifique, social, culturel, politique, économique et j'en passe !

Tu nous as fait découvrir tant de pays africains et du monde, comme je n'en connaissais pas auparavant.

Mais, en ce qui me concerne, tu m'as surtout permis de découvrir la vaste et intarissable littérature ainsi que l'immense bibliothèque des sciences sociales en Afrique. C'est avec toi que je tomberai et plongerai dans le vaste, l'époustoufflant, le passionnant et encore très actuel thème de la décolonisation des sciences sociales, de la dé-colonialité des savoirs (et de tant d'autres sphères), sans oublier la découverte de la bibliothèque coloniale dont l'évocation de l'impérieuse nécessité de sa déconstruction par d'éminents penseurs comme Valentin Mudimbe, Mamadou Diouf, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, et bien d'autres, m'a fait et me fait

toujours succomber. Ce dialogue entre les Africains, mais aussi et surtout entre l'Afrique et les autres continents, je pourrais dire simplement ce dialogue au sein de l'Humanité que tu as su construire et instaurer, constitue ton charme auquel j'ai succombé pour la vie.

J'ai fait ta connaissance en 2008, j'en avais deux de moins que toi. Ne serait-ce que pour cela, je te dois de faire une inclination devant toi, certes pour respecter ton droit d'ânesse, mais aussi pour tout ce que tu m'as apporté depuis ta découverte, notre rencontre. Comme il a été inculqué aux filles et aux fils d'Afrique, le droit d'ânesse demeure l'une des valeurs cardinales de nos peuples, dont l'un des fils a pu capter le sens véritable en affirmant à l'Humanité que : «en Afrique, un vieillard qui meurt est une bibliothèque qui brûle». Or tu constitues à toi seul-e une bibliothèque, oui une bibliothèque pour l'éternel et pour le monde! Et pour cela, malgré tes cinquante ans, malgré nos deux ans d'écart, je te voue le respect dû aux aîné-e-s. Mais ton cinquantième anniversaire à toi, que j'aspire à atteindre, est bien

loin d'être commun. Il résonne comme un énantiosème : à la fois une maturité tonitruante et une vieillesse rajeunissante!

Je disais que j'ai fait ta connaissance (hélas tardivement) en 2008, mais, mieux encore, tu m'as accueilli en 2012, alors que tu étais sur le point de fêter tes quarante bougies. Cette entrée dans ton antre, entre tes entrailles, dans et entre tes murs, fut l'une des plus belles expériences intellectuelles, scientifiques et professionnelles de ma carrière. C'était dans le cadre du programme RFGI (Responsive Forest Governance Initiative). Je n'en dirai pas plus! Je renverrai simplement à la centaine de productions et de publications scientifiques issues de ce programme de recherche, réalisées majoritairement par des jeunes chercheurs africains, sous la direction d'autres chercheurs d'Afrique et du monde, plus expérimentés. Quelle expérience enrichissante et féconde, pour la vie et pour l'éternel!

Pour tout, je te dis mille mercis, je te dis simplement merci pour la vie, pour l'éternel.

À toi l'aîné-e, je te suis reconnaissant pour toujours, pour l'éternel.

À tes fondateurs et tes pionniers, je leur dis merci! Je pense notamment aux défunts professeurs Samir Amin, Thandika, et tant d'autres!

À tous ceux qui continuent à te faire vivre, je dis merci de rendre service à l'Afrique et à l'Humanité.

À l'occasion de tes cinquante ans, je te souhaite d'exister pendant un demi-siècle encore, puis de nombreux siècles.

Que ton vent continue de souffler pour longtemps! Que ton cœur et tes poumons continuent de battre pour toujours, pour l'éternel!

Je te souhaite de continuer à produire et à diffuser des connaissances sur l'Afrique, pour une meilleure et juste connaissance de celle-ci et de ses peuples, pour un dialogue entre tous les peuples du monde. Ainsi, que tes veines et tes artères du savoir continuent à irriguer l'Afrique et l'Humanité tout entière!

Que je suis fier et chanceux d'être un membre de la communauté du Codesria. Et pour cela, je suis tout simplement et ostensiblement un codesrien pour toujours, pour l'éternel.

The poster features a background of an open book with orange leaves scattered on its pages. It includes the CODESRIA logo in the top left and a '50' anniversary logo in the top right. The main text reads: 'Call for Applications', 'Deadline: February 20, 2024', 'Meaning-making Research Initiatives (MRI) 2023 - 2024', and 'Special Call for Female scholars'. At the bottom, it provides contact information for CODESRIA and a link to submit an application.

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CODESRIA is pleased to announce the (MRI) 2023-2024 Special call for Female Scholars <https://codesria.org/meaning-making-research-initiatives-mri-2023-2024-special-call-for-female-scholars/>



# CODESRIA at Fifty: What a Journey!

## Introduction

February 2023 marked the fiftieth anniversary of CODESRIA, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (the Council). As far as I can tell, the Council is Africa's premier social science research council and the oldest surviving pan-African social science council. The anniversary offers up a moment to celebrate the impact that the Council has had on the social science landscape of the continent and to pause to take stock and reflect on its vitality going forward.

The 'myth of origin' of what we know as CODESRIA traces its antecedents to the Council of Directors of Economic and Social Research Institutes in Africa. It is claimed that in the late 1960s the Rockefeller Foundation convened a meeting in Bellagio, to which several directors of African national, economic and social research institutes were invited. These participants returned to the continent determined to self-organise and coordinate their activities autonomously. Around 1972, the coordinating chair of the group of directors of research institutes, Professor H. M. O. Onitiri, Director of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, spent a sabbatical year at the United Nations Institute for Economic Development and Planning (UNIDEP). Its director was Samir Amin. The discussion

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between Onitiri and Amin led to the Council being anchored at UNIDEP.<sup>2</sup> This origin may partly explain why, until 1992, formal membership of CODESRIA was institutional, made up primarily of African economic and social research centres and institutes. Whatever the validity of its origin or antecedents, the Council in its modern form was established in 1973, with Samir Amin as its first Executive Secretary and Jacques Kazadi Nduba Wa Dile (the Zairean economist) as its first President. Samir Amin's executive secretaryship was part-time, since the directorship of UNIDEP was his primary job.

In addition to getting the Council going, Samir Amin negotiated the diplomatic status of the Council with Leopold Sédar Senghor, the president of Senegal at the time. It is a measure of Senghor's commitment to creating a space for the autonomy and freedom of African social science intellectuals that the government of Senegal, under his presidency, granted the Council diplomatic status.<sup>3</sup> (It is also why, as rickety as the vehicles

of the Executive Secretary of the Council may be at times, they carry the CMD licence plate – Chef du Mission Diplomatique – Chief of Diplomatic Mission). Subsequent generations of members and beneficiaries of the Council owe Samir Amin a debt of gratitude for the special status that the Council enjoys in the Republic of Senegal. Amin served as Executive Secretary of CODESRIA until 1975, still on a part-time basis.

Following the demands by the UN authorities in New York, the nascent organisation that had been harbouring within UNIDEP had to make a clean break away from it. Abdalla Bujra, a Kenyan sociologist, navigated the Council out of UNIDEP and into its autonomous existence. He would serve from 1975 to 1985 as the first full-time Executive Secretary of the Council. From its initial flowering to 1995, the Council was known as the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa. Three presidents served at the Council with Bujra. In addition to Jacques Kazadi's overlapping tenure, they were Kankam Twum-Barima (the Ghanaian agricultural economist), Justinian Rweyemamu (the Tanzanian development economist) and Jacob Mwanza (the Zambian economist). At that time, Bujra established *Africa Development* as a scholarly journal. It was also under Bujra that the first 'national working groups' were launched as a core research vehicle of the Council.



Many of us in my generation became aware of CODESRIA during the tenure of Thandika Mkandawire, who was the Executive Secretary from 1985 to 1996 (having initially served as acting Executive Secretary in 1985). The Council took shape under Thandika in its current format – its sprawling publication programme, a plethora of research activities, vigorous debates within the pages of *CODESRIA Bulletin*, its mobilisation of the African social science community on what Archie Mafeje called the ‘Big Issues of the Day’, and its interventions to support new generations of African social science researchers in the face of the public funding crisis of the African higher education sector. Claude Ake (the Nigeria political scientist), Taladidia Thiombiano (the Burkinabe economist), Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (the Congolese historian-philosopher) and Akilagpa Sawyerr (the Ghanaian legal scholar and jurist) served as presidents during Thandika’s tenure as Executive Secretary.

In the period since 1996, the Council has been served by four executive secretaries – Achille Mbembe (1996–2000), Adebayo Olukoshi (2001–2009), Ebrima Sall (2009–2017) and Godwin Murunga (2017 to the present). Over the same period, the following have served as president – Mahmood Mamdani (1998–2002), Zenebeworke (Zen) Tadesse (2003–2005), Teresa Cruz E Silva (2005–2008), Sam Moyo (2008–2011), Fatima Harrak (2011–2015), Dzodzi Tsikata (2015–2018) and the current president since 2018, Isabel Casimiro. The election of Zen as the first female president of the Council in 2003 marked a significant shift in representativeness within the Council. Five of the last six presidents have been women.

In 1995, the Council adopted the current iteration of its name – Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa – while maintaining the CODESRIA acronym. Similarly, with the amendments to the CODESRIA Charter of the same year, the president ceased being ‘President of the Executive Committee’ to become ‘President of the Council.’

### **The Encounter: A Biographical Note**

My encounter with the Council started in 1989 when I applied for the CODESRIA-Rockefeller Reflections on Development fellowship programme. At the time, I was teaching at the University of Ibadan. I had just returned from a conference in Nairobi on a research project on the theme of African Perspectives on Development, where we had presented the first drafts of our contributions to the research project. These were later published as *African Perspectives on Development* (Himmelstrand, Kinyanjui and Mburugu 1994). I stopped by the office of John (Johnny) Ohiorhenuan, a remarkable mentor and economist at the Department of Economics at the University of Ibadan. During our discussion, Johnny drew my attention to a new call for applications for a fellowship programme at CODESRIA, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. This was the Reflections on Development fellowship, which provided opportunities for laureates to spend six months in a research institute outside their usual base and reflect on a theme of their choosing in the field of development. Johnny suggested that I should seriously consider applying for it. I had never heard of CODESRIA. Although the Nairobi-based research project had stirred in me several issues I

would like to pursue beyond the project, I felt totally inadequate applying for such a prestigious fellowship, which offered USD 25,000 in grant for each laureate. I was barely in the second year of receiving my doctoral degree. Johnny, a respected mentor, was a laureate of the inaugural round of the fellowship. He insisted that I should apply.

I got to work on the application and sent it in ahead of the closing date. Several weeks later, I received a letter formally confirming that my application was successful and that I was a recipient of the fellowship grant. This was followed by an inception workshop in Kampala, and then my fellowship period, which I spent at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva, the meeting at the Bellagio Centre, where the laureates presented their reports, and finally the conversion of my report into a book, *Labour in the Explanation of an African Crisis* (1995). In the process, I got to meet Micere Mugo, Mahmood Mamdani, Thandika Mkandawire and my host in Geneva, Dharam Ghai. In many ways, this initial encounter would boost my career and lay the pathways for future research endeavours and encounters.

At the 1992 General Assembly of the Council at Novotel in Dakar, Senegal, I experienced an intense rush of adrenaline. It was the biggest and most pan-African intellectual gathering that I had attended till then. It was inspirational as much because of the lively debates at the different sessions – plenary and parallel – as the optimism underpinning the gathering. Against the prevailing subversion of African intellectual and policy agency and the turgid pessimism that enveloped discussions about

Africa, here was Africa's biggest gathering of its social science intellectuals debating the same set of issues with vigour and positivity – not avoiding the challenges of the moment but confronting them head-on. I had found my pan-African intellectual home. It was a home adorned with the splendour of the diversity of our humanity on the African continent.

The General Assembly was also the point of encounter of a different type. After having 'met' several scholars through their works, I now met in person the people whose works had inspired me since my undergraduate days. Among them was Archie Mafeje, who turned out to be quite human and humane and did me the honour of autographing his book, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* (1991), a copy of which still graces the shelf of my library.

In addition, the 1992 General Assembly witnessed the arrival of a younger generation of African intellectuals at the Council, CODESRIA's Second Generation. It was a group who forced onto the agenda the issue of individual membership of the Council to replace the old exclusive institutional membership, and got it adopted.

For me, what the Council offered was a community steeped in intergenerational engagement and dialogue. The longevity of its leading members – from Samir Amin to Archie Mafeje, Thandika Mkandawire, Fatou Sow, Zenebeworke Tadesse, Mahmood Mamdani and Akilagpa Sawyerr – meant a veritable mentorship by stealth, which has been a core part of the functioning and cohering of the Council. In a context where we bemoan Africa's brain drain crisis,

Bachir Diagne once noted that 'CODESRIA does not suffer brain drain' – its members were there for the long haul. If there was a face you could guarantee would be at a CODESRIA General Assembly, it was that of Samir Amin. Only death prevented Samir from being at the 2018 General Assembly.

### **An Evolving and Responsive Social Science Council**

From its beginning, the Council has sought to be a nimble organisation that responds to the prevailing challenges of the social science community in Africa and the continent's policy demands. It has strived to address the 'Big Issues of the Day'. Below, I touch briefly on a few of these and the professional challenges that the Council has met with commitment.

At the Council's inception, development challenges were of primal importance and relevance within the African social science community. Through its research programmes and particularly the national working group projects the Council mobilised the community to respond to the intellectual and policy challenges of development. Many of its leading lights were themselves actively engaged with 'thinking development' from the perspective of the global South, Africa and its specific countries. Samir Amin's position as the director of UNIDEP and his broader critical engagement with development concerns, under conditions of global capitalism, was informed by the emancipatory imperative of development within the framework of the Bandung Conference (1955). Scholars such as Justin Rweyemamu were intellectually engaged with the imperatives and challenges of industrial development and tackled policymaking within their

national contexts. These early works should serve as a resource for a new generation of African scholars seeking to navigate the development challenges that our continent continues to face.

As the continent braced itself against declining development performance in the late 1970s, the Organisation of African Union (OAU) released its blueprint for rejuvenating Africa's development, The Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa: 1980–2000 (OAU 1979). The World Bank would publish the Berg Report in 1981 (World Bank 1981), which would serve as the template for the fundamental macro restructuring of the African economies under the neoliberal agenda of stabilisation and liberalisation. The following years would witness the full-blown deployment of the Structural Adjustment Programme. From the Lagos Plan of Action to the Berg Report and structural adjustment, the Council responded in a diversity of ways. The pages of *Africa Development* and the *CODESRIA Bulletin* were devoted to robust and critical engagements with the documents and the emerging neoliberal counter-revolution. In 1985, the Council organised a major conference on Structural Adjustment in Africa, at the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria. These interventions advanced not simply critiques of structural adjustment but offered alternatives. Many of the critiques of structural adjustment and the existential threat that it posed for Africa's development prospects were first articulated at the conferences and other interventions from the Council.

The early debates on democratisation in Africa, against the backdrop of the one-party state

and military rule, were driven within the Council by competing visions and rationales. The *CODESRIA Bulletin* was a platform of vigorous debate between the contesting perspectives on democracy. The ultimate question was whether democracy was desirable because it would stimulate development or that it should be valued for its intrinsic qualities. The debate culminated in the theme of the February 1992 General Assembly, *Democratization Processes in Africa: Problems and Prospects*. The General Assembly served as an impetus for further debates and several publications from the Council. In the context of a new wave of military coups d'état on the continent, it would be useful to revisit Thandika's arguments on the danger of 'choiceless democracies' (which hollow out democracies), the absence of deliberative governance and making democracies the handmaiden of neoliberalism. To support continuing critical reflections on democracy and governance, the Council established its annual Governance Institute, in 1992.

A major shift in the work of the Council in the 1990s arose from the struggle for the gendering of the social sciences in the African context and for gender equity in its governance processes. Drawing on the intellectual and organisational works of the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) and its members, the intellectual work of the Council was robustly critiqued by AAWORD and other feminists in the Council. The result was greater attention and integration of gender concerns in the work of the Council, as well as a major publication, *Engendering African Social Sciences* (1997), co-edited by Ayesha Imam, Amina Mama

and Fatou Sow. The volume has been described as 'one of the most pioneering works in the field of gender and social sciences in the Africa context, and remains an authoritative text. It is an extensively researched and forcefully argued study offering a critique and directions for gendering the social sciences in Africa.'<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, a proposal at the 1995 General Assembly to have all applications and publications vetted for gender sensitivity was rejected by the assembly. This was primarily on the grounds of maintaining the epistemic openness of the Council. However, the Council continues to encourage epistemic sensitivity to gender concerns. And in 1996, the Council inaugurated the CODESRIA Gender Institute as part of the decision reached at the 1995 General Assembly 'to integrate gender research and methods into the mainstream of the Council's work'. The institute has run on an annual basis since 1996.

By the late 1980s, persistent violation of academic freedom had become a primary concern for the Council. Intellectuals lived under the constant threat of harassment, arrest, imprisonment and even assassination by state and non-state actors for no other reasons than the performance of scholars' intellectual duties. Many across the continent faced travel restrictions. The debate within the Council revolved around whether intellectuals should be demanding 'special' rights within the wider political atmosphere of authoritarianism and intolerance that underpinned the restrictions. Some argued that the right to academic freedom, rather than being special, is essential for the successful performance of scholarly work.

The outcome of the debate within the Council was the November 1990 symposium in Kampala, Uganda, on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Intellectuals. This produced the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility, which was adopted on 29 November 1990. Together with other international affirmations of the right to academic freedom, such as the Lima Declaration of 1987, the Kampala Declaration upholds the rights as well as the social responsibility of intellectuals. It declares intellectual freedom as a 'fundamental right'. This includes the right to protection from harassment or intimidation 'for reasons only of his or her intellectual work, opinions, gender, nationality, [and] ethnicity', and the right to 'freedom of movement within his or her country and freedom to travel outside and re-enter the country without let or hindrance or harassment' (Kampala Declaration 1990). The declaration also affirms the right to form autonomous organisations and to the autonomy of institutions, and sets out the state's obligation to guarantee, affirm and protect the rights outlined. Equally important is the insistence of the declaration on the social responsibility that intellectuals bear not to be complicit in the violation of the intellectual freedom of others. They 'have a responsibility to promote the spirit of tolerance towards different views and positions and enhance democratic debate and discussion' (Ibid.).

The Kampala Declaration would become a seminal text and intervention in protecting intellectual freedom on the continent, with its provisions adopted in the constitutions of some African countries. To support the advocacy and implementation of the declaration's provisions, the



Council established the Academic Freedom Project and created a fund to assist academics who were facing harassment.

A different set of agile responses of the Council to the conditions of the African social science community includes programmes to support a new generation of social science scholars in the context of significant defunding of the higher education sector within the framework of the Structural Adjustment Programme. Among these is the Small Grants for Thesis Writing, and the Methodological Workshop programme. The decline in public funding for higher education has made the conditions for the continuation of the scholarly community dire. The Small Grants programme, the first such initiative, was set up in 1988 to provide financial and bibliographic support for students registered at African universities towards completing their master's and doctoral dissertations. A complement to the Small Grant programme is the Methodology Workshop programme. Again, this was in response to the crisis of solid competencies in methodology, which was increasingly evident from the write-ups the Council received.

In response to the depleted capacity of several university libraries to provide up-to-date literature for their students and staff, another initiative, the CODESRIA Documentation, Information and Communication Centre (CODICE), would acquire literature in each grantee's field of research and mail the stack of materials to them. The funding component of the grant was intended to defray fieldwork expenses and the cost of producing the dissertations. Several funding institutions and agencies around the world would later adopt this initiative.

The Council remains Africa's premier social science body in providing a range of programmes, funding national and multinational research projects, and offering various publication outlets – from the *Bulletin* to scholarly peer-reviewed journals, a working papers series (that sets out the cutting edge of intellectual debates and maps out research programmes), and the CODESRIA Book Series.

### **A Social Science Home for All**

One narrative touted about the Council is its association with left-wing scholarship. This confuses its commitment to an Africa-focused and Africa-driven orientation with an ideological situatedness. The Council is oriented towards the agency and autonomy of Africans to determine their future. If the CODESRIA 'myth of origin' is to be believed, it is the same commitment that inheres in the 'nationalist orientation' to policymaking best articulated by the thoughts and writings of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. While the Council is animated by African agency and autonomy, its selection process for inclusion in any of its programmes or activities has been driven by an independent evaluation of applications and manuscripts. This remains a central ethical approach to its works. This insistence on epistemic openness is at the heart of the Council's operations. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, the rejection at the 1995 General Assembly of the proposal to have all applications and submissions to the Council vetted for their gender contents was not based on a dismissal of the salience of gender discourse. Instead, the argument that won the day was to avoid a prior imposition of a particular epistemic take on the social sciences.

### **To the Next Fifty Years: Challenges and Opportunities**

The fiftieth anniversary of the Council is a moment for the unabashed celebration of an organisation that has weathered the storm and stands tall as Africa's most consequential social science council. The longevity of the Council is, in great measure, a testament to the determination and incredible sacrifice and commitment of those with responsibility for its stewardship. It has resulted from the dedication of its members, its funders and the support of the government of Senegal.

The following fifty years will require no less a measure of commitment and dedication by those charged with the Council. It must remain nimble in responding to the continent's challenges and those of its social science community. As the funding landscape shifts, the Council must pay greater attention to securing its funding base. This is an existential matter. The Council needs to reinvigorate its Endowment Fund. With the decline in donors' commitment to core funding, the Council must secure its capacity to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities within the African social science community. Most salient are the issues that are least attractive to funding agencies, in the short run.

As one generation hands over the baton to the next, we should all commit ourselves to a CODESRIA that does not suffer brain drain but remains steeped in intergenerational and interdisciplinary engagement and dialogues. The following fifty years require us to rededicate ourselves to the vision and commitments of the earlier generation that bequeathed



CODESRIA to us. It is our home; its flourishing should be our mission and collective aspiration.

## Notes

1. Jimi Adesina served on the Executive Committee of CODESRIA from 2002 to 2008. He was Chair of the Programme Sub-Committee of the Executive Committee from 2005 to 2008.
2. Personal communication – Akin Tade Aina on discussions with HMO Onitiri.
3. Personal communication (conversations over the years) with Thandika Mkandawire.

4. Endorsement blurb for Engendering African Social Sciences (1997).

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# I Owe CODESRIA: Tribute to a Pan-African Intellectual Council

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## Introduction

I would like to declare my indebtedness to CODESRIA. The balance sheet showing what I contributed to CODESRIA and what I received from it weighs heavily in favour of the latter. I am indebted in ways that this short tribute can barely testify. Here I can simply mention some of the highlights and lows of my engagement with an organisation now celebrating its jubilee. Simply surviving for half a century in a climate of hostility is a major accomplishment. CODESRIA has done much more than merely survive. It has thrived to become the premier scholarly association for the social sciences on the continent and is now unrivalled in its all-encompassing reach and reputation.

Let's be frank, the reputation has not been all good. In fact, for long periods it was plagued by administrative inefficiency and a

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cavalier approach to management and governance. Any candid assessment of the organisation cannot but mention these frailties, but they pale in relation to the inestimable role that CODESRIA has played in the lives and careers of so very many African scholars. I was one of the many thousands of its beneficiaries. I would like to recount my indebtedness, not like a backslapping praise-singer but rather as a recollection of my engagement with CODESRIA using the metaphor of a balance sheet. Through this engagement, I hope to reveal a broader narrative of an evolving organisation and its struggle to build communities

of social science scholars and scholarship in a context of major asymmetries in knowledge production between the global North and the South and during a time of enduring continental crises.

## Early Days

I was first introduced to CODESRIA by Kwesi Prah in the late 1980s, when we were colleagues in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. He encouraged me to apply for CODESRIA's Reflections on Development postdoctoral fellowship and he acted, together with Neville Alexander, as a referee for my application. I was fortunate to have been awarded the fellowship and it profoundly shaped my life. At our first seminar in Dakar in the early 1990s, I remember the vitality of our discussions, the immediacy of our concerns, and the critical awareness that we were part of an

intellectual community struggling to decipher the intricate details of our condition. It was a heady sense of excitement and fulfilment to participate in something bigger, encompassing the entire continent. But I also recall the vibrancy of the city, alive with the graceful posture of a liberated people, especially the women. As a reminder, South Africa was changing at the time, but we were still under an apartheid regime. Walking around Dakar's Independence Square and our compulsory visit to Goree Island left an indelible impression on me.

The fellowship also gave me the great opportunity to meet, befriend and be mentored by Thandika Mkandawire, who looms very large in my experience of and encounters with CODESRIA over the years and, of course, beyond his time as executive secretary. Our friendship continued until his untimely death, and I am very pleased that while I was editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* we published his last article, posthumously, a tour de force on transition in Zimbabwe.

It was also in the early 1990s that CODESRIA went through a major transformation, from being an association made up exclusively of directors of research institutes, centres and faculties of social science to an organisation with dual institutional and individual membership. New scholars made up the bulk of the latter, drawn to CODESRIA on account of its environment of independent research, away from their own institutions' constraints and, often, the political tyranny of their home countries. They started to play a significant role in determining the trajectory of the organisation. Steeped in activism and steeled by struggles at their universities and further afield, these younger scholars profoundly shaped new directions

for CODESRIA. As Mkandawire (1999: 26) asserted, 'The radical turn of political economy in CODESRIA circles was largely accounted for by the fact that pan-African institutions (such as CODESRIA, AAWORD and AAPS) were created and led by pan-Africanists and pan-Africanism'.

It was the heyday of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in Africa and CODESRIA took the bull by the horns in providing wide-ranging critiques of them from a diversity of perspectives. Besides the dismal failure of the SAPs' stated objective of improving economic growth, these programmes undermined the very basis of African sovereignty, propped up undemocratic regimes, severely damaged African universities (the casualties of the World Bank prioritising primary education) and marginalised African researchers in favour of so-called expert consultants. CODESRIA was at the forefront of an intellectual response to the programmes, which were obviously deleterious to African interests.

Not only did CODESRIA promote a direct role for African intellectuals in the face of the enormous challenges confronting African economies and livelihoods, they also fostered an understanding of the broader connections between research, an informed citizenry and democracy. Defending intellectual freedom lay at the heart of this concerted CODESRIA effort. Premised on the conviction of autonomous African intellectual voices, CODESRIA did more than most in revealing the enormous detriment of these programmes.

But there was something amiss here. How should local intellectuals engage with the state in Africa? And what should be the modalities of this engagement? In this regard, Mkandawire made

the pointed statement that one of our big problems is the 'failure of the political class to establish a productive and organic rapport with their own intelligentsia/intellectuals' (Mkandawire 2001: 205), and that across the continent, only in Algeria and in apartheid South Africa did such an organic link develop between the two. Precisely because of an experience of widespread persecution, often by dictatorial regimes, it was not surprising that African intellectuals, especially those of a critical bent, would be reluctant to collaborate with the state. In fact, the crises at universities in Africa occasioned by the SAPs were closely connected to the wider economic and political crises. African intellectuals were caught in the middle of this unfolding drama of economic decline, institutional disintegration, social uncertainty and political turmoil in their home countries, and it is not trite to state that CODESRIA provided a safe haven for them. The struggle for intellectual freedom was seen as intrinsic to the broader struggles for liberation and democracy. I felt very at home in the broadly anti-imperialist stance of much of the writing and in the positionality of CODESRIA itself. It was the kind of hospitable embrace that gave me a sense of what we could accomplish in fostering an overarching pan-African approach.

The change in focus in CODESRIA culminated in the adoption of the Dakar Declaration following the 1988 General Assembly. It articulated the connections between the struggles at universities and in wider society in the following terms:

The task of resolving the African crisis imposes a specific responsibility on the African social science community. To meet this responsibility, it must take stock of its own

shortcomings ... the research process must not only seek to achieve self-reliance within the international social science community ... but should also focus on the issues and relations that are of concern to the vast majority of the toiling peoples of Africa as they engage in their daily struggle for existence. These struggles must be for the basis for scientific conceptualisation, and the focus of scientific analysis ... It will also serve to put social science knowledge at the service of the vast majority of the African population, especially the movements for the democratization of the continent and the full emancipation of its people. ('Dakar Declaration' 1988, cited in Hoffmann 2017: 158)

Two years later, this positioning in relation to popular struggles was consolidated in the adoption of the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility. Article No 22, for example, states:

The intellectual community has the responsibility to struggle for and participate in the struggle of the popular forces for their rights and emancipation. (my emphasis) (cited in Diouf and Mamdani 1994: 352).

This is a very different approach to the legalism and implied individualism of much writing on academic freedom. The very emphasis on intellectual instead of academic freedom speaks volumes about the shift in emphasis in CODESRIA. There can be little doubt that the Kampala Declaration unambiguously calls for an engaged intelligentsia, one that locates itself within social struggles.

### **African Sociological Review**

Following the Reflections on Development workshop in Dakar, I was again very fortunate to be

given the opportunity to establish a continental vehicle for sociological thought and research. The *African Sociological Review (ASR)* was launched in 1997 at a conference at the University of Cape Town (UCT) on Cultural Transformations in Africa, organised jointly by Mahmood Mamdani at the Centre for African Studies at UCT and the Law School at Emory University.

Our editorial team has changed over the years. Momar Coumba Diop was appointed editor for French submissions from the second issue; in Volume 5, published in 2001, we included Francis Nyamnjoh and Abdelkader Zghal; from Volume 6, Jeff Lever and Momar Diop withdrew as editors; from Volume 8 onwards, we appointed Elizabeth Annan-Yao and Onalena Selolwane as editors and Alcinda Honwana as book review editor. Our editorial meetings, whether in Senegal or South Africa, were always jam-packed with fascinating discussions about the state of our continent, often interlaced with stories of the ingenious practices of political corruption. We joked about these, and laughed at ourselves, since humour seemed the only rational way to deal with just how outrageously brazen every new case of corruption had become.

The launch of the journal came with a warning from Thandika Mkandawire about what he described as the syndrome of African journals: the first issue is launched with great fanfare, only for it to be the last issue. The *ASR* was established with the support and stewardship of Mkandawire and fellow sociologist, Tade Akin Aina, through the various CODESRIA boards and committees. Going through some of the earlier issues of the journal from the late 1990s and early 2000s, I am struck by how the work of some CODESRIA

stalwarts is foregrounded. I had met Archie Mafeje about a decade earlier in Washington DC and I am still awed by his polemic in an article we published as the opening for our first issue. As editors, we entitled it 'Who are the Makers and Objects of Anthropology? A critical comment on Sally Falk Moore's "Anthropology and Africa"' (Mafeje 1997). It was a powerful engagement with the issues that we, as editors, regarded as central to our mission in the new journal – how an awareness of the politics of knowledge production should inform an authentic Africanist discourse.

This review article was followed two issues later by another comprehensive overview, entitled 'Anthropology and Independent Africans: Suicide or End of an Era?' (Mafeje 1998). It was a provocative challenge to African anthropologists to question their post-independence identity, to interrogate their silence in the face of Northern intellectual hegemony and to consider the authentic distinctiveness of anthropology as a discipline. We invited a number of anthropologists to respond to Mafeje. Five took up the challenge, kindling a debate about the future of anthropology that remains relevant to this day. Mafeje wrote a magisterial response to his critics and, in my view, any student of anthropology cannot claim to know the discipline in Africa without an acquaintance with these interchanges. They are indispensable to a full appreciation of the nature of the discipline.

Since I viewed debate as the lifeblood of any journal, I tried to encourage intellectual exchanges – for example, by arranging a review symposium on Mahmood Mamdani's pathbreaking book, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of late*



*Colonialism* (1996). As we did for Mafeje, we invited a number of African scholars to review the book and we gave Mamdani a chance to respond to his reviewers. While the exchange was rich, I must admit that I felt a bit cheated after reading Michael Chege's review of the book, which was published in the very first issue of the *African Studies Quarterly* in 1997. It is a brilliant article, from which I recall this quote, which I believe is definitely worth sharing as an invitation to all to try to read the entire review itself.

But all this reinforces the terrific diversity of colonial structures at the grassroots. Indeed, long after independence, there were regions in Africa – like northern Chad and interior Mozambique – where it was news that the colonialists had departed. The people had never heard of their arrival. (Chege 1997: 49)

Nostalgia also overtook me when I looked at all the addresses we had published. As editor I hunted down people at the meetings I attended, and as a result of making a nuisance of myself we published a number of speeches. The first of these was a presidential address given at CODESRIA's ninth General Assembly in December 1998 by Akilagpa Sawyerr, on 'Globalisation and Social Sciences in Africa' (Sawyerr 1999), which is a comprehensive, detailed account of the wide variety of meanings of globalisation. I have a vivid recollection of Sawyerr's address. In a packed hall in the steamy heat of Dakar, he provided a carefully crafted intervention, in which he offered a frank assessment of the parlous state of CODESRIA.

In essence, it amounted to a frontal attack on the performance of the then executive secretary, Achille Mbembe. It must be remembered

that Mbembe came very close to presiding over the demise of the organisation. So poorly was the place run, so random the decisions taken, with blithe attention to due process, that the funders had started to become very edgy. I am informed by the current executive secretary, Godwin Murunga, that soon after Mbembe departed, his successor – Adebayo Olukoshi – reported to the Council that it had less than one month's worth of finances to support operations. Surely, this must count as one of the low points of the organisation, but it simultaneously raised questions about CODESRIA's dependence on external funding, which remains an ongoing concern for the organisation. While it is clear that CODESRIA's funders may not have interfered in the direct running of the place, there is a broader problematique related to the nature of the organisation, its autonomy and democracy. The administrative failures were also accompanied by a shift in intellectual focus, away from the committed and engaged scholarship tied to the popular struggles.

We were very fortunate that Thandika Mkandawire agreed that the *ASR* could publish his Claude Ake memorial lecture, also given at the ninth General Assembly. Entitled 'Social Sciences and Democracy: Debates in Africa', Thandika offered a sort of intellectual history of CODESRIA, highlighting important debates with some really interesting anecdotes. I wish here to provide just two short extracts to give you a sense of the speech.

A major preoccupation of CODESRIA has been to create an autonomous space where African intellectuals can reflect on the continent's processes. It was part of the struggle for liberation – this

time extended to the intellectual sphere. (Mkandawire 1999: 30)

Self-censorship was ... widespread and not always tied to fear of the state. For example, it was politically incorrect to criticise intellectuals who were at the same time being hounded by the state. (Mkandawire 1999: 23).

Amina Mama delivered a keynote address titled 'Challenging Subjects: Gender and Power in African Contexts', at a Nordic Africa Institute conference in Uppsala in October 2001, which we published in the same year. This beautiful formulation has remained with me all these years.

At the present time, if we choose to look beyond the sinister machinations of late capitalism and listen beyond the battle cries of powerful men we will hear the quietly persistent challenge articulated by women. (Mama 2001: 71)

We also published an address by Herbert Vilakazi (2001) to the Africa Institute of Southern Africa in August 2001, 'African Intellectuals and the African Crisis: In Honour of Professor Ben Makhosezwe Magubane', as well as a brilliant keynote address presented at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala in September 2002 by Tade Akin Aina (2003), called 'Scales of Suffering, Orders of Emancipation: Critical Issues in Democratic Development in Africa'. Publishing these addresses allowed our readers access to material relatively quickly after the actual event, before the days of immediate access.

It pleases me enormously to report that Godwin Murunga, current Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, reviewed more books and wrote more review essays than anybody else during the twelve

years that I was one of the editors of the *ASR*. I was always thrilled by his insights on a wide range of topics in the many books that he reviewed for us. There are few practices of good academic citizenship that surpass the reviewing of books. It is an absolutely vital brick in building communities of scholarship, especially in a period when the production of knowledge, irrespective of its quality, appears to dominate its consumption. In my view, people are writing too much, a great deal of it drivel, and reading too little. There is possibly a link between the lack of quality in our output and a poor reading culture. Murunga's sustained commitment to reviewing is therefore to be applauded.

In the early days when we started the *African Sociological Review*, it must be remembered that as editors we did everything ourselves: ensuring that we got good copy; finding reviewers and badgering them to submit their reports; communicating with authors; dealing with printers; inserting the journals fresh from the printers into the envelopes we had labelled and posting them to subscribers. So primitive were our methods at the time that I remember tracing the CODESRIA logo by hand in order to copy it for the *ASR*. Since it is still alive, with twenty-six volumes published and counting, I think we can safely say that we've not succumbed to Thandika's syndrome.

### Deans and Editors

CODESRIA has attempted to mobilise the widest possible social science participation in its activities. I was part of at least two such initiatives, viz. editors' meetings and meetings of deans. My recollection is that neither translated into any lasting institutional structure, despite

our best efforts. The former was always a good opportunity to share experiences as editors and to see how we might improve our practice. I benefitted a great deal from these meetings as we debated our pet hates as editors, the main problems we continued to face in securing good copy, the difficulties in finding reviewers for our submissions, then the tough task of ensuring that they submitted their reports timeously, and so on. Here I would just like to mention one such pet hate: the arrogance of established scholars in submitting work that is sub-par and expecting us to publish it on account of their past reputation.

Thus, while I found the editors' meetings worthwhile, I think the attempt to organise deans was dead in the water from the start. I suppose part of the problem here is the wide variety of models of deanship on the continent, basically operating as a continuum between deans who are elected by members of their faculties on the one hand and executive deans appointed by those above, on the other. I am unsure how this might have informed the idea of establishing the South African Humanities Deans' Association (SAHUDA), of which I became the founding president, but I think it is safe to say that there is a connection here and I would encourage the establishment of such national deans' associations across the continent. Perhaps they could be the springboard for continental cooperation at a deanly level.

### The Rise and Decline of Debate

There was a time when debate reigned supreme in CODESRIA, when we waited with bated breath for the next issue of the *Bulletin* in order to follow the ongoing intellectual battles. Archie Mafeje

was often at the heart of this exciting engagement, and I tried to capture some of these exchanges using the metaphor of 'argument as war' in an article published in the *Bulletin*, entitled 'Crossing Swords and Drawing Blood: Archie Mafeje – A Warrior in a Double Battle' (Hendricks 2008). Mafeje could always be relied upon to push the boundaries of our understanding in ways that boring attention to empirical detail could never hope to accomplish.

CODESRIA is of course not the only organisation where there has been a decline in debate. Instead, it is part of a much wider syndrome of dumbing down, of a lack of critical engagement, of severing ties with the struggles and challenges that face ordinary people and, consequently, of a major shift towards careerism and so-called professionalism. So, the question I would like to pose is: why should professionalisation result in a segregation from struggle? Should these struggles not form the creative roots of our scholarship? I am reminded of a discussion I had with Thandika soon after he took on the job as Director of UNRISD. In proposing a new direction of social policy research, this was questioned by the existing staff, who argued 'we have contact with the grassroots in Africa'. Thandika's retort was vintage: 'What you see as grassroots, I see as my intellectual community'.

The trappings of professionalisation have definitely stultified our disciplines, and there is a real need for us to recommit ourselves to the mission of the humanities, social sciences and arts, broadly defined. Let us not get bogged down in the endless debates about the boundaries of the broad bands of our disciplines. Instead, let us

follow Archie Mafeje's lead in identifying social problems and research questions outside of contrived disciplinary frames.

Every day, across the continent, there are popular struggles around a wide range of issues – land, for example, urban and rural, or industrial disputes, or educational crises, or municipal incapacity to deliver social services. Yet it is rare to notice the work of university-based academics being debated in the public sphere. My main argument is that our work within the boundaries of our campuses will become petrified if it is not fed by the creative possibilities of an active dialogue with those outside these boundaries. By those outside, I mean the state and civil society. In other words, we have to decipher both ongoing struggles and state policies. Part of the reason for the confinement of our scholarship to university campuses is a misguided notion of the so-called professionalisation of our disciplines, which coerces scholars into particular modes of practice with little concern for the real problems our societies face.

In the light of this deleterious impact of professionalism, I would like to call for a deprofessionalisation of our disciplines. Let us shake them loose from the shackles imposed on them. One of our huge advantages in the global production of academic work is our intimate knowledge of language and culture, and we need to use this intimacy as a basis for our own theorisations of our condition. I am not suggesting that we sink into empiricism, nor is this a call necessarily for authenticity. Instead, we should use the richness of this local knowledge to challenge stereotypes and produce the kind of knowledge that cannot be ignored by anybody.

However, even this is not enough. Simply producing and facilitating high-quality scholarship is not enough because of the power relations in knowledge production, which prevent some of our brilliant manuscripts from being published. The global free market of ideas is a complete misnomer, as we have seen how the self-appointed gate-keepers ensure Northern dominance, if not monopoly, over certain areas. In response, our agency has to take account of the necessity for organisation and mobilisation. Communities of scholarship are not going to emerge spontaneously. We have to organise them – and CODESRIA has done more than most in ensuring that this happens.

Despite its prodigious accomplishments, the work of CODESRIA is not done. If we take just one measure, Africa's contribution to global book output, then we see just how huge the challenges are that we face. Currently, Africa contributes less than 2 per cent of books annually published in the world. But the really telling statistic is that 60 per cent of these books are school textbooks. Taking this into account, we can see how high the mountain is that we still have to climb. We can do this only through a concerted effort of building self-referring and self-respecting communities of scholarship across the continent.

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## Some Personal Reflections on CODESRIA

The year 2023 is a special one in the lives of two organisations with which I have been closely associated: CODESRIA and the Forum for Social Studies (FSS) of Ethiopia. It marks the Golden Jubilee of CODESRIA, with which I have been associated since the early 1990s, and the Silver Jubilee of FSS, which I helped found with five other colleagues in 1998 and which I have headed at various times as Board Chair and Executive Director. As it will become evident further down, the lives of the two organisations became intertwined more than once.

I was first exposed to CODESRIA through my good friend and CODESRIA veteran Zenebeworke Tadesse, who knew about me and arranged that I be invited to a CODESRIA conference in Dakar in 1990. She was then Deputy Executive Secretary and Publications Officer of CODESRIA. It was a baptismal experience as I partook in the vibrant debates that are so characteristic of the CODESRIA community. My presentation was on a topic that I broached earlier at a Horn of Africa conference in New York on the Ethiopian military in politics.

As it turned out, that paved the way to my initiation into a CODESRIA research network on military and militarism in Africa. This was one of the Multinational Working Groups (MWG) that the organisation had launched at the time. It was ably coordinated by Eboe Hutchful of

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Wayne State University, who had an uncanny ability to combine serious application with an inexhaustible supply of humour. He was assisted by Abdoulay Bathily of the University of Cheikh Anta Diop, designated to handle the Francophone side of the team work. It was a truly multinational team, with researchers coming from Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. In addition to the case studies, there were papers on cross-cutting themes.

The group had two workshops: the methodology workshop in Dakar and the final workshop in Accra. During the latter, I distinctly recall sitting next to Thandika Mkandawire, then Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, and discussing his fascination with my statement that the saxophone was the preferred musical instrument to accompany the traditional Ethiopian war chant, *shelela* or *fukara*. I also recall our refreshing trip to Cape Coast, hometown of Eboe Hutchful, after the end of the workshop, when we had a chance to visit the infamous slave trade outlet, Elmina Castle. Our group's research finally resulted in one of CODESRIA's

prime publications, *The Military and Militarism in Africa* (1997), co-edited by Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily.

Later in that decade, I was invited to join another MWG on the theme of 'Urban Processes and Change' led by AbdouMaliq Simone. I was introduced to the project by the Congolese Tshikala Biaya, who was working at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) at the time. Tshikala and I have come to know each other closely as Research Associates of the OAU-initiated International Panel of Eminent Personalities to investigate the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. As it happened, the panel was led by a former Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, Abadalla Bujra. Over lunch, Tshikala, who had come to be fascinated by the urban tapestry of Addis Ababa, urged me to join the research group and put the city on the continental urban landscape, along with Cairo, Cape Town, Dakar and Lagos, among others. I readily consented to the proposal and explored how Addis Ababa has evolved over time to become a polycentric city. My article, 'The City Centre: A Shifting Concept in the History of Addis Ababa', came out in 2005 in the volume entitled *Urban Africa: Changing Contours of Survival in the City*, edited by AbdouMaliq Simone and Abdelghani Abouhani.

Over and above my academic engagement, I was also involved administratively with CODESRIA. And here is where the interlacing with FSS becomes most prominent. In 2003, CODESRIA was celebrating its thirtieth anniversary with a series of regional workshops in a build up to the grand finale that was scheduled to take place in Dakar in December 2003. The Eastern African edition was held in Addis Ababa in early 2003 under the auspices of FSS. As Chairperson of the Board, I was involved in the hosting of the conference, along with Zene Tadesse, who was the inspirational figure behind the founding of FSS. The papers presented at this regional conference were published in 2005 under the title *East Africa: In Search of National and Regional Renewal*, edited by Felicia Arudo Yieke. Included in the collection was my own paper, 'Intellectuals and Soldiers: The Socialist Experiment in the Horn of Africa', even though I had actually presented it at the final conference in Dakar in December 2003 rather than at the Eastern African edition.

Within a year of that joint undertaking, the CODESRIA-FSS relationship assumed a more enduring shape with the launch of the *Africa Review of Books*. The idea of initiating a journal dedicated to the substantive review of books on Africa, modelled pretty much after the famed *New York Review of Books* or the *London Review of Books*, has been a long-standing objective of the CODESRIA leadership. But it took quite a while to make it a reality. In the end, after a call for proposals to manage the journal was made to various think tanks and research institutes, FSS was selected to manage the bilingual journal, with the Algerian-based Centre de recherche en anthropologie sociale et culturelle (CRASC) responsible for

the French section. I was designated by FSS as the English Editor while Zene served as Managing Editor. CRASC assigned Hassan Remaoun as Editor of the French section.

The launch of the long-awaited *Africa Review of Books (ARB)* was greeted with considerable jubilation, as can be gauged from the following welcoming statement by the Executive Secretary at the time, Adebayo Olukoshi:

So, the Africa Review of Books (ARB) is born! The road that has been travelled to produce this maiden edition of the Review has been a long one and the obstacles that have had to be surmounted numerous. In fact, at a point, such was the magnitude of the difficulties encountered that some were tempted either to give up on the project altogether or to postpone it indefinitely or even modify it so radically as to alter its identity as an autonomous product of the African social research community. But many others also held on tenaciously to the dream, convinced that the impeccable ideals that underpinned it necessitated the investment of all the energies required to bring it to fruition. That is why the appearance of this first issue of the Review carries with it a sense of historic moment which, hopefully, will also mark the beginning of a new phase, indeed even a turning point in the study of Africa. It is for this reason too that there is a pervasive sense of celebration accompanying the issuance of the maiden edition of the publication.

FSS also welcomed the publication of *ARB* as

a challenge for which we feel the experience of the last six years has prepared it adequately. It is a calling to which it responds with no illusion of the hard work involved but also with a determination to give the best and the utmost of what it has. For

this is an initiative that addresses a long-standing need and realizes the dream of the African social science research community.

While we are prepared to give all, we do earnestly hope that we will also get the reciprocal support of the academic and research community concerned with Africa as well as the non-academic groups and individuals for whom this initiative marks a turning point in the critical discussion of African publications and African issues. The success of such a venture depends as much on the widest and most active participation of the audience as in the dedication and hard work of the editorial staff.

FSS's call did not fall on deaf ears. Particularly in the initial years, *ARB* was able to attract some of the best minds of the CODESRIA community to contribute to the biannual issues. Over time, the English section came to count on some dedicated reviewers like Adekeye Adebajo and Sanya Osha for the English version. The French section likewise had some regular contributors, notably members of the sizeable CRASC staff. The result was that *ARB* did not experience the problem of backlog from which so many other journals, including CODESRIA ones, suffered. Moreover, the journal earned a high reputation in the academic community. Although review articles were generally solicited rather than submitted, and although they did not undergo the review process of standard journal articles, some of the published articles were reportedly presented for academic promotion by their authors.

An Index prepared by FSS in 2016 gave a good overview of the amount of work done in the preceding twelve years. The index was divided into three components: general, reviewers and publishers. What becomes

evident from a cursory review of the index is that almost every African country was represented in the books reviewed as well as the reviewers solicited. Although some essays were included, most of the contributions were reviews of a book or sometimes multiple books. While we might not have risen to the level of our models, the *New York Review of Books* and the *London Review of Books*, a number of the reviews were of high quality.

At the risk of being capricious, one can cite in the Essays category, Godwin Murunga's 'African Cultural Identity and Self-writing' (Vol. I, No. 1), Ali el Kenz's 'Les chercheurs africains, une "élite"?' (Vol. I, No. 1), Georges Nzongo-lantlaja's 'The Great Lakes Region since the Genocide of 1994 in Rwanda' (Vol. I, No. 2), and Ibrahim Abdullah's 'Africans Do Not Live by Bread Alone: Against Greed, not Grievance' (Vol. II, No. 1). Likewise, in the Reviews category, one can cite Thandika Mkandawire's review of Jeffrey Sachs' book, *The End of Poverty*, and Mahmood Mamdani's review of two books on the Rwanda genocide (both reviews appearing in Vol. II, No. 1), Adekeye Adebajo's review of Mandela's biography by Tom Lodge (Vol. IV, No. 1) and his review of three books on Barack Obama's life, including his two autobiographies (Vol. V, No. 2), Gebru Tareke's review of two books on the Ethiopian student movement (Vol. V, No. 1), and Sanya Osha's review of the biography of Fela Kuti (Vol. IX, No. 1).

One or two special issues were also published. Such was the case with Volume I, No. 2 (2005), which was designed to mark the decennial of two contrasting developments in the continent: the final liberation of South Africa from apartheid, and the genocide in Rwanda. There was also a special issue dedicated

to Lusophone Africa, in partial recognition of CODESRIA's initial mandate of quadrilingualism.

All this is not to say that the production of the journal was without its problems. The initial publishing agreement with the University of South Africa Press did not go so well. Production became relatively smoother after CODESRIA took over the publishing from the second issue on. But the greatest challenge was getting reviewers for books. Although writing book reviews had the incentive of keeping the review copies to oneself, not all potential reviewers were enticed by it. There were also cases when reviewers got review copies and failed to deliver. The French section faced this problem to a lesser degree because CRASC could draw on the large pool of researchers attached to it. On the other hand, the French reviews suffered from being too much focused on the Maghreb, with the rest of Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa rather sparsely represented.

From the outset, the need to synchronise the activities of the two editorial teams was strongly felt. That was the rationale for the joint meeting held in Oran (seat of CRASC) in May 2005, a year after the launch of *ARB*. The meeting was attended by members of the two editorial teams as well as Adebayo Olukoshi, the Executive Secretary, and Francis Nyamnjoh, the Head of Publications, representing the CODESRIA Secretariat. Somewhat inadvertently, the meeting turned out to be at the same time a formal launch of the journal, as our CRASC colleagues had invited members of the academia and civil society to the event. The meeting discussed and resolved various editorial issues, including an update on the maiden issue of the journal, progress reports on subsequent issues, the activation of the International Advisory

Board, clarification on the essential character of a review journal as distinct from other journals, and a strategy for the long-term future of the journal. The Oran meeting also decided to have only one issue with two sections (English and French) rather than two separate issues, as was mooted at some stage. Also broached at this stage was the idea of making *ARB* a self-sustaining enterprise rather than it being totally dependent on CODESRIA, an idea that Thandika emphasised more than once but proved elusive to the end.

*ARB* was, of course, one of eight or so journals that CODESRIA was publishing. That was quite a daunting task by any standards. One of the ways by which the organisation tried to synchronise their activities was the holding of annual journal editors' workshops, when the editors would present progress reports and exchange experiences for better effect. These business exchanges were usually preceded by a fruitful discussion on the publishing world around a concept paper prepared by the Publications Department of CODESRIA. Probably the last such meeting of editors, the 9<sup>th</sup> edition, was held in tandem with the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly held in Rabat, Morocco, in December 2011. The rationale for the coincidence of the two events was to give the journal editors to get to know potential contributors and reviewers to their respective journals. The meeting was opened with a keynote address by Adam Habib, then Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg, on the theme of 'Equitable Higher Education, Inclusive Development and the Commercial Academic Publishing Industry'. Unfortunately, this useful tradition of annual meeting of journal editors was suspended after that, presumably because of shortage of funds.



# The Freedom to Differ

## Introduction

In 2006, Amina Mama gave the Bashorun M. K. O. Abiola Distinguished Lecture at the 49th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association in San Francisco, with the title ‘Is it Ethical to Study Africa?’. At the outset of her talk, she said:

I will not be discussing the work of Africanists, but rather discussing the manner in which ethical concerns have been addressed within an intellectual tradition of African scholarship that is largely progressive in its orientation. This is not a tradition defined by conventional and obedient discipline-based academic study. I would instead describe it as a critical tradition premised on an ethic of freedom. Such scholarship regards itself as integral to the struggle for freedom and holds itself accountable not to a particular institution, regime, class, or gender but to the imagination, aspirations, and interests of ordinary people. It is a tradition some would call radical, as it seeks to be socially and politically responsible in more than a neutral or liberal sense. It is guided by an ethic that requires scholars to be identified with, and grounded in, the broad landscape of Africa’s liberation and democracy movements. (Mama 2007: 2–3)

Amina Mama went on to argue, among other claims, that the liberatory promise of the anticolonial nationalist eras remained unaccomplished and that African intellectuals still had a lot to do. Almost twenty years on, one may be tempted to ask whether the situation has changed significantly. While

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there may be misgivings concerning the right answer to this question, one thing is sure: if the situation has not changed, it is definitely not because African intellectuals have not tried. CODESRIA has tried very hard to fulfil the liberatory promise and take the gauntlet thrown at it by the challenge of seizing centre stage in producing knowledge of Africa. Not all credit goes to CODESRIA, of course. Still, today, more than ever before, nothing passes for knowledge of Africa that has not gone through the scrutiny of an increasingly critical African scholarly community that finds inspiration in such intellectual giants as Samir Amin, Thandika Mkandawire, Archie Mafeje, Sam Moyo, Fatou Sow and so many more who have been strongly associated with the work of the Council.

The vigour with which ‘post-colonial’ and ‘decolonial’ perspectives are pursued bears testimony to this vibrant intellectual environment. The scholarship that has hailed from Africa for more than fifty years is committed to the militant suspension of belief when knowledge claims have not been sufficiently questioned concerning the authority of who makes them and the warrant they give for the innocence of the concepts with which they formulate their claims. CODESRIA has been about defining a place of enunciation that

is African, by which no essential notion of Africa is implied but rather the deeply historical realisation of a place in the world constituted by history. The history in question is not the languid and innocent passage of time. Instead, it is the outcome of what Valentin Y. Mudimbe describes in *The Invention of Africa* as the ‘colonising structure’ that embraces, in his words, the physical, human and spiritual aspects of the colonising experience (Mudimbe 1988). This corresponds to what the same author posits as accounts on the basis of which the invention of Africa can be critically constructed, namely, how colonialism proceeds as intervention, occupation, appropriation and abduction into an alien world (ibid.), boiling down to domination, cultural estrangement and structural integration into the world economy.

## The Freedom to Differ

I joined the academic world in the late nineties after completing my PhD in Sociology at a German university, with a thesis that studied the debate over whether there is an African philosophy, which African philosophers have pursued passionately for decades (Macamo 1999). I was fascinated by the energy that went into that debate. Not being a philosopher myself, I was content to simply work out the significance of the debate to scholarship in Africa. I concluded that I was, in fact, witnessing the emergence of Africa as a construct denoting a community of fate. My first participation at a General Assembly was in 2002, in Kampala,

Uganda – at the invitation of the then Executive General, Adebayo Olukoshi, who introduced me into the CODESRIA family. The Council was celebrating 10 years of the Kampala Declaration on Academic Freedom. That was my induction into the CODESRIA family. The significance of that occasion boiled down to the extent to which my first experience of an African scholarly community consisted of a cry for the right to engage in knowledge production unencumbered by the usual constraints of authoritarian regimes.

I realised through this experience that CODESRIA was engaged in the business of claiming for itself the freedom to differ—that is, the freedom to differ not only from received wisdom in Africa but also from the wisdom of the canon. The freedom to differ comes down to three methodological points:

1. degrees of understanding;
2. the relationship between facts and ideas; and
3. the organisational apparatus of translation.

The idea of degrees of understanding bears on the simple fact that understanding is never absolute. It goes from nothing to full. We know this from the principles of induction, deduction and abduction. First, to understand we need to accumulate bits and pieces of knowledge that we consolidate into intelligible patterns. This is the inductive mode that is privileged in qualitative research. Second, we use the intelligible patterns to develop our best possible explanations of something while at the same time saying why we think the explanation is likely to be correct. This is abduction, which pragmatist philosophers define as inference to the best explanation. Third, and

finally, we seek to confirm what we think we know, which is deduction, once upon a time held to be the scientific method par excellence.

The freedom to differ has focused on challenging knowledge that results from too strong a focus on deduction or reliance on what we think we know. This favours the knowledge stored in the ‘colonial library’, which imposes itself as the set of valid premises from which conclusions about the nature of phenomena in Africa should be drawn. CODESRIA has insisted, instead, that African researchers should privilege induction and abduction—what we think we know should be informed by what we think we know and not by what others think they know about us.

Furthermore, the relationship between facts and ideas is quite straightforward. Facts do not speak. We make them speak. Or rather, facts are intelligible within theoretical frameworks. Suppose I see Kenyans, for instance, burning shops and cars after elections. In that case, I could say, this is post-electoral violence, which would suggest a problematic democratic culture. Or I could say, this is ethnic violence, suggesting perhaps a weak civic culture. Either way, the facts have not spoken for themselves. I have made them speak. What we see is often the result of ways of seeing. Put differently, how we choose to look at what happens determines also what we look at and how we make it count. CODESRIA has encouraged researchers to treat what passes for knowledge of Africa as the result of decisions taken by (Northern) researchers to make facts speak.

Finally, knowledge production is, deep down, translation. Science, therefore, can be conceptualised

as an organisational apparatus of translation, consisting of three elements. First, an infrastructure that enables us to transform information into data, to sift through information in search of those bits and pieces that we think are most relevant to whatever we are studying. Second, we process data by translating it into evidence, indicating why we think it is relevant to whatever claim to knowledge we are making. Finally, we fine-tune evidence by translating it into knowledge—the conditions under which we can claim that a certain truth holds. CODESRIA has established itself as a powerful intellectual apparatus through its training programmes, research funding and publications. In so doing, it has engaged in the intellectually rewarding work of ascribing the status of knowledge to everything we can say based on what happens within the organisational apparatus of translation.

## Conclusion

I understand African Studies to be a kind of ‘methodology of the social sciences’ and an excellent way of critically assessing the nature of knowledge in the social sciences. This is so because nobody really studies Africa. That would amount to assuming knowledge we do not have. We would be taking for granted that which would undermine our knowledge. So to engage in African Studies is to deal with the very possibility of knowledge. This is what the methodology of the social sciences is about and why the crucial question is knowing what knowledge is and, for those of us in the social sciences, what the social is.

Knowledge is not what we know. Knowledge is how we know—hence, how we arrive at what we

know. The social, in turn, is not the world shared by people but the effort we invest in sustaining the illusion of knowledge. CODESRIA has been claiming the freedom to differ from colonial accounts of Africa. As far as I can surmise, it has insisted on reflecting on the conditions of the emergence of that illusion and the practical investment

people make in its maintenance. It has defined itself by asking how Africa was constituted as an object of knowledge.

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## Le CODESRIA : une institution au service des causes africaines

### Préambule

Cette année, le Codesria (Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique) aura cinquante ans. À cette occasion, revenir sur la façon dont nous avons pu nous inscrire et développer des liens avec une organisation à l'identité panafricaine établie permettra de comprendre les efforts et les difficultés rencontrées, mais aussi les réussites d'une institution en sciences sociales et humaines basée dans le continent africain, forte de la conviction, de la nécessité de connaître avant d'agir. Porté par des intellectuels africains engagés, le Codesria s'est doté d'un programme de recherche, mais aussi de formation, pour mieux aider à avancer dans les politiques de mise en œuvre d'un développement social et économique au bénéfice des populations africaines. Les sciences sociales savent être, ainsi que Bourdieu a pu le comprendre, «une "arme" politique au service de la critique sociale des formes de répression et de domination» (Hammouche 2016).

Nonobstant le fait que le Codesria soit au centre de plusieurs tensions et paradigmes : autonomie/dépendance, continent/hors continent, africain/non africain..., c'est dès ses débuts, avec Thandika Mkandawire, Archie Mafeze, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, que le Codesria adopte «une posture africaniste

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radicale, non seulement du point de vue des rapports politiques Nord/Sud, mais aussi du point de vue scientifique avec le projet de mettre en place une science sociale dite «africaine» (Barro 2010).

### Ma première rencontre avec le Codesria

Ce n'est que dans les années 2000 que mon tout premier véritable lien s'est fait, à l'occasion du colloque sur le genre organisé au Caire par le Codesria et le Centre d'étude africaine, en avril 2002. Ma réaction d'étonnement et de plaisir durant le colloque à l'égard du Codesria a été proportionnelle à la qualité des interventions d'un haut niveau théorique, à la qualité de l'interprétation et à la qualité d'organisation.

Nous avons été invitée par le Pr Hilmi Chaaraoui, directeur du Centre des études arabes et africaines (ARCAASD) du Caire, qui avait lourdement insisté pour que je puisse y contribuer. Et c'est

en réaction à une «provocation» volontaire de notre collègue Hilmi, devenu ami par la suite, que je décidai d'y participer (alors même que mon agenda de travail était surbooké). Depuis une dizaine d'années, particulièrement depuis notre prise de responsabilité en 1992 en tant que directrice du Centre national de recherche en anthropologie sociale et culturelle (Crasc), nous cherchions à établir des liens avec les institutions sur le continent et particulièrement avec le Codesria, mais avec beaucoup de difficulté. Une double raison pouvait expliquer cette impossibilité : la situation vécue en Algérie durant une dizaine d'années, caractérisée par la lutte contre le terrorisme islamiste voulant imposer un climat de terreur et de tétanie, et probablement aussi, à l'époque, une faible visibilité et des moyens d'accès à l'institution limités.

Notre attention et notre attachement comme chercheuse en sciences humaines et sociales pour le Codesria tiennent à son triple rôle :

1. comme lieu de rencontre, d'échange et de partage de la réflexion sur l'Afrique avec les Africains, où qu'ils soient, avec l'orientation idéologique affichée pour le développement ;
2. comme lieu de production d'idées, car le Codesria a la chance de mettre en interaction des universitaires dont les traditions philosophiques, politiques et

linguistiques sont diverses (anglophone, francophone, lusophone et arabophone) ;

3. comme lieu de formation des jeunes chercheurs, particulièrement avec l'organisation des ateliers méthodologiques en sciences sociales et les instituts sur des thèmes particuliers.

Il y eut des moments forts en émotion durant les assemblées générales, dont j'ai gardé un souvenir impérissable, notamment à Kampala en 2002 : échanges avec une collègue égyptienne, rencontres avec le secrétaire exécutif du Codesria, Olukoshi Adebayo, ainsi qu'avec le président du Comité exécutif, Mahmoud Mamdani, rencontres aussi de quelques membres connus comme Carlos Lopez (Guinée-Bissau, professeur à l'Université du Cap), balade avec Ali El Kenz que j'avais connu en Algérie.

### **Mon expérience personnelle au Comité exécutif**

Le Codesria, inscrit au cœur d'un riche réseau institutionnel, a contribué en grande partie à nous ouvrir le champ des possibles en matière de collaboration internationale.

C'est en tant que membre élue pour l'Afrique du Nord (pays du Maghreb et Égypte) au Comité exécutif sur deux mandats successifs de 2002 à 2008 que notre engagement sur et pour le continent s'est précisé et étendu. L'affiliation à un agenda académique et politique institutionnel nous a ouvert au moins trois autres perspectives d'engagement : celle de l'Institut africain de la gouvernance (IAG), celle de l'Unesco et celle du Comité des politiques de développement (CDP). Le conseil d'administration était présidé par Abdoullah Sy et

j'en assurai la vice-présidence. Créée en 2007, en tant que jonction entre les institutions panafricaines et régionales avec le gouvernement du Sénégal à Dakar, cette institution avait pour objectif de mettre en place un «centre d'excellence» panafricain afin de promouvoir le concept de gouvernance. Ce dernier a été intégré dans le cadre du nouveau partenariat pour le développement de l'Afrique (Nepad). En 2012, Abdoulie Jannah a été président de l'IAG, inaugurant le séminaire/consultation sur les progrès réalisés dans le domaine de la gouvernance et de la démocratie au sein des États membres et intervenant dans le contexte de la préparation de la célébration du cinquantième anniversaire de l'Organisation de l'Unité africaine (OUA)/Union africaine (UA) en 2013.

Il y eut aussi l'Unesco qui, en 2003, a lancé une grande initiative, celle d'un Forum mondial pour l'enseignement supérieur, la recherche et la connaissance, avec des représentations au sein de comités régionaux. Nous avons eu l'honneur d'en présider, de 2003 à 2006, le Comité arabe, au sein duquel la restructuration, la diversification des filières de l'enseignement supérieur, la gouvernance des universités, les conditions de productions académiques furent objet de réflexions et propositions académiques.

En 2013, j'ai été nommée par le secrétaire général de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en tant que membre du Comité des politiques de développement<sup>1</sup> (CDP) qui aide et conseille, en tant qu'organe subsidiaire du Conseil économique et social des Nations Unies (Ecosoc), sur les questions liées à la population et au développement,

et dont la mission est de surveiller la mise en œuvre du programme d'action de la Conférence internationale sur la population et le développement (CIPD) et les résultats de ces conférences d'examen. Cela, afin d'assurer «un développement mondial solidaire, équitable et durable, axé sur les besoins et les réalités des êtres humains, et pas seulement sur les chiffres et les statistiques<sup>2</sup>». J'ai dû suspendre ma participation en 2014 à ce Comité, après avoir été sollicitée par mon pays pour une mission, celle de ministre de l'Éducation nationale, mission assurée de 2014 à 2019.

La mise en place, en 2023, du Comité spécial du Codesria chargé de l'examen de la stratégie de mobilisation de ses ressources concrétise un souci permanent au sein de l'institution : celui de répondre à la question clé de savoir comment agir intellectuellement en Afrique sans la convocation de contributions financières africaines. Cinquante ans après sa naissance, les différentes instances de l'organisation sont préoccupées par les évolutions, voire les changements d'orientation politique de pays, notamment scandinaves, dont le soutien jusqu'alors avait été décisif.

Il fallait dans ces nouvelles conditions perpétuer la rigueur, l'ambition et les objectifs que s'était assignés le Codesria dès sa naissance en 1973, pour devenir une institution panafricaine dans un contexte alors marqué par la phase de décolonisation et de construction d'États nationaux indépendants au service des populations. C'est à l'initiative d'intellectuels engagés, entre autres, de Samir Amin, Abdellatif Benachou, que le projet d'une pareille organisation a vu le jour.

## L'institutionnalisation progressive des liens

Nous avons saisi l'occasion<sup>3</sup>, en accord avec le secrétaire exécutif, de l'organisation lors d'une session ordinaire du Comité exécutif, dont nous étions membre, pour programmer en 2004 une table ronde au siège du Centre de recherche en anthropologie sociale et culturelle<sup>4</sup> (Crasc) à Oran autour des «Rôle et place des sciences sociales à l'université». Cette rencontre a donné l'occasion à la communauté universitaire algérienne d'échanger avec les collègues venus de différentes régions d'Afrique.

Pour la même année 2004, nous avons en tant que centre de recherche candidaté à un appel d'offres lancé par le Codesria pour l'édition en langue française de la *Revue africaine des livres*. La *Revue africaine des livres* est le résultat d'une expérience de coopération continentale, à l'initiative du Codesria. L'élaboration de l'*Africa Review of Books* nous a permis de nous tenir informés des productions sur l'Afrique, d'être attentifs, au cours des rencontres, à tous les collègues disposés à nous proposer des synthèses critiques.

Pour ce qui concerne les ateliers méthodologiques pour l'Afrique du Nord, organisés depuis 2006 à Oran dans le cadre d'une convention entre le Crasc et le Codesria, chaque année, 15 lauréats venus de divers pays du nord de l'Afrique (Mauritanie, Tunisie, Maroc et Algérie) pouvaient confronter leurs expériences. C'était une opportunité pour que nos étudiants de l'École doctorale nationale en anthropologie puissent suivre cette formation, qui les a aidés à toujours être plus performants dans leurs recherches.

De même, en mars 2010, le Codesria, dans le cadre de ses activités scientifiques, a organisé à Oran une rencontre internationale sur les «Libertés académiques et responsabilités scientifiques et sociales des universitaires et des chercheurs en Afrique : quels nouveaux défis?»

Autant d'activités qui n'ont fait que renforcer les liens qui, je l'espère, perdureront, entre nos deux institutions. Ces liens ont permis une circulation des chercheurs en Afrique aussi bien dans les institutions de formation qu'à travers les séminaires.

L'affiliation et l'engagement au Codesria nous ont permis d'élargir des perspectives de mise en réseau avec d'autres institutions en sciences humaines et sociales. Ce qui ne pouvait qu'amener un plus à l'expérience et aux activités des institutions de recherche.

## Avenir et défis à relever

Nos attentes pour le Codesria, en qui nous plaçons beaucoup d'espoir, consistent d'abord à résoudre la question de savoir comment assurer et garantir la pérennité d'une institution en trouvant des sources de financement ne dépendant pas que des bailleurs de fonds. Il faudra perpétuer les expériences positives ayant eu un impact sur la recherche et la construction de liens entre chercheurs nationaux et africains à travers les groupes nationaux et multinationaux de travail, afin qu'elles puissent être un moyen de renforcement de capacités et d'évaluation des recherches menées. Pouvoir se doter, comme d'un atout de changement et de positionnement à l'échelle continentale et internationale, d'indicateurs adaptés et non complaisants pour classer les institutions. Il s'agira

d'élaborer un classement africain de reconnaissance de la qualité des publications, de la performance des institutions et de la contribution académique à la compréhension des processus de développement.

Des efforts doivent être menés pour imposer les libertés académiques comme un droit humain, nécessaire pour la survie intellectuelle et l'émergence de paradigmes alternatifs contre la dépendance, pour une vision de soi souveraine et afin d'avoir des perspectives pour asseoir un destin collectif honorable reposant sur les aspirations des peuples au droit de bénéficier des richesses nationales, tout en nous appuyant sur l'accès à la connaissance.

## Conclusion

Après les indépendances, et quelle que soit la nature des pouvoirs mis en place dans les différents pays africains, l'éducation des futures générations, par le développement d'un réseau d'universités et d'écoles supérieures, a été largement réalisée. Cependant, malgré les efforts fournis, notamment en matière de contenus des programmes et de nationalisation du corps enseignant, il demeure urgent de requestionner les référents thématiques et paradigmatiques des formations post-graduées en Afrique dans les diverses universités ayant vu le jour.

Grâce à l'action du Codesria, l'effort a été rendu possible, concrétisant ainsi un idéal, celui d'établir des ponts entre chercheurs et institutions africaines; effort à développer et à consolider en ce qui concerne les référents locaux tout en restant attentif aux frémissements des idées venant d'ailleurs.

Puisse l'académique, représenté par le Codesria, réaliser ce que



les politiques ont bien du mal à construire, mettre en œuvre de l'unité dans la diversité et la richesse de notre continent! Un continent au cœur d'un triple processus : de développement national, de coopération continentale pour la paix et les échanges et de résistance face aux cupidités externes.

### Notes

1. Ce dernier organise une session annuelle en avril au siège des Nations Unies à New York : 47 États membres des Nations Unies sont élus pour siéger au CDP pendant 4 ans.
2. Pour reprendre les termes de la fiche élaborée par CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality sur le CDP dans le cadre du programme d'alliance Right Here, Right Now!
3. Réunion du Comité exécutif du Codesria à Alger en 2004.

3. Dont nous avons assuré la direction de 1992 à 2014.

### Références

- Barro Aboubacar Abdoulaye, 2010, «Coopération scientifique et débat sur les "sciences sociales africaines" au Codesria», *Cahiers de la recherche sur l'éducation et les savoirs*, n° 9.
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## Le Codesria : cinquante ans de contribution à la construction d'une pensée économique critique

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**C**réé il y a cinquante ans, le Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique (Codesria) a réussi non seulement à se faire un nom de producteur crédible et réputé de connaissances en Afrique par les Africains, mais également à s'imposer comme un réseau de recherche panafricain porteur de valeurs de diversité et ouvert sur le monde. Aujourd'hui, il se positionne comme l'une des rares institutions africaines de recherche et de plaidoyer qui continue de préserver son indépendance intellectuelle et de résister face aux nouvelles contraintes imposées par la mondialisation néolibérale.

Certes, le Codesria s'intéresse aux sciences sociales dans leur ensemble, mais pour des raisons historiques, l'économie a toujours été au cœur de ses préoccupations. Celles-ci se sont d'abord manifestées au lendemain des indépendances avec la question de la décolonisation des économies africaines; elles se sont ensuite

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intensifiées durant les années quatre-vingt et quatre-vingt-dix du siècle dernier, à la suite du lancement des programmes d'ajustement structurel et du consensus de Washington; enfin, elles se sont confirmées au début du millénaire, marqué par la montée en puissance de la mondialisation et l'extension de son emprise. Par rapport à ces événements économiques et bien d'autres, le Codesria a clairement choisi son camp : celui de la critique du capitalisme dérégulé et de la contestation des politiques économiques libérales promues par les institutions de Bretton Woods.

Bien que l'économie ait tendance à s'uniformiser et à se professionnaliser sous l'effet des règles établies par les universités américaines, le

Codesria a continué d'approcher cette discipline sous un angle socio-historique et historique. La pensée économique qui en a découlé s'est progressivement affirmée dans le monde académique et de la recherche, non seulement comme une attitude protestataire, mais surtout comme une démarche réflexive éclairée par des faits sociaux et des croyances collectives, bref une pensée critique qui interroge l'économie en tant que véritable science sociale au service de l'humanité.

L'engagement du Codesria dans le processus de construction de cette pensée peut être appréhendé à travers trois arguments : la présence d'économistes africains de haut niveau dans les instances décisionnelles de cette institution, l'attachement aux idées de l'économie hétérodoxe, et, enfin, l'inscription des questions économiques, qui exigent davantage de rigueur scientifique et plus d'audace, sur l'agenda intellectuel du Conseil.

## Une gouvernance marquée par l’empreinte de grands économistes africains

Durant les vingt premières années de son existence, le Codesria a été dirigé par des économistes africains engagés, visionnaires et adeptes d’une approche économique hétérodoxe. Ainsi, entre 1973 et 2011, six économistes avaient successivement occupé le poste de président du Codesria. Il s’agit du Congolais Jacques Kazadi Nduba Wa Dile (1973-1976), du Ghanéen Kankam Twum-Barima (1976-1979), du Tanzanien Justinan F. Rweyemamu (1979-1981), du Zambien Jacob Mumbi Mwanza (1982-1985), du Nigérian Claude Ake (1986-1989)<sup>1</sup> et du Burkinabè Taladidia Thiombiano (1989-1992). Naturellement, cette présence des économistes à la tête du Conseil n’a pas été un choix par défaut, mais plutôt légitimiste, car issu d’élections. Pourtant, nous ne pouvons pas nier la portée de deux faits majeurs qui ont probablement incité de manière tacite ou expressément la communauté formée des membres de l’institution à préférer un chercheur de formation économiste : d’abord le danger que représente le néolibéralisme pour le continent et le consensus qui s’est dégagé autour de la nécessité de faire un plaidoyer intellectuel avec des preuves convaincantes face à l’apparition des premiers indices de complicité de certains gouvernements africains avec les institutions de Bretton Woods ; ensuite, de par son ouverture et ses liens très marqués avec d’autres disciplines des sciences sociales, la science économique est interdisciplinaire, ce qui lui confère un regard pluriel sur les questions qui façonnent et engagent l’avenir de l’Afrique.

En outre, durant cette même période, le poste de secrétaire exécutif du Codesria fut occupé à deux reprises

par deux économistes africains de renommée internationale, en l’occurrence Samir Amin (1973-1975) et Thandika Mkandawire (1985-1996). Fortement engagés dans la construction d’une pensée économique indépendante et dans l’action militante, ces deux pionniers d’une économie pluraliste et transdisciplinaire ont marqué de leurs empreintes trois, voire quatre générations d’économistes africains, et ils ont contribué au même titre que les autres secrétaires exécutifs, eux aussi fascinés par le raisonnement et les idées économiques (Abdallah Bujra, Achille Mbembe, Adebayo Olukoshi, Ebrima Sall et Godwin Murunga), à la formation et/ou à l’inspiration d’une intelligentsia africaine en prise avec les masses populaires et ouverte sur le monde. À l’évidence, cet engagement n’a pas manqué d’impacter positivement la notoriété de l’institution et sa propulsion au rang des meilleurs think tanks africains.

Signalons par ailleurs que cette présence d’économistes à la tête des deux principaux organes du Codesria s’est traduite par l’ajout du terme «économie» dans ses deux premières dénominations institutionnelles, à savoir respectivement la Conférence des directeurs des instituts de recherches économiques et sociales en Afrique, et le Conseil pour le développement de la recherche économique et sociale en Afrique. En fait ce n’est qu’en 1992 que la dénomination actuelle (le Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique) fut entérinée par la 7<sup>e</sup> assemblée générale tenue à Dakar.

## Un engagement en faveur d’une économie hétérodoxe

Dès sa création en 1973, le Codesria s’est imposé comme un acteur incontournable en matière d’accueil et de promotion des idées

économiques hétérodoxes, offrant ainsi une alternative crédible à la thèse néoclassique dominante ou mainstream, qui se base sur l’hypothèse de la rationalité économique universelle et qui prône un modèle de développement unique et normalisé. Le Codesria a grandement contribué à déconstruire le discours économique hégémonique et essentialiste produit sur l’Afrique. Malgré la tentative controversée de modifier cette ligne directrice à la fin des années quatre-vingt-dix, le Codesria est resté, et demeure encore très critique à l’égard de l’uniformisation de la pensée économique. Celle-ci a été, à notre avis, l’une des causes de l’incapacité des élites au pouvoir en Afrique à faire face aux problèmes socio-économiques récurrents comme le chômage, l’inflation et les inégalités, mais aussi et surtout à réinventer un nouveau modèle de développement plus inclusif, plus durable et mieux adapté au contexte.

Bien que la communauté des économistes africains affiliés au Codesria ne forme pas un corps homogène, ses membres sont d’avis que le sous-développement de l’Afrique serait le produit du capitalisme, mais également des mauvaises politiques économiques conjuguées à la faiblesse de la gouvernance démocratique. Pour étayer cette thèse, ils se sont appuyés sur de nouvelles règles chères au courant hétérodoxe, notamment le pluralisme méthodologique et la contextualisation historique. Outre Samir Amin, l’un des pères fondateurs de l’institution, qui avait marqué le monde avec ses œuvres sur le développement inégal et l’altermondialisme, et Thandika Mkandawire qui a été l’artisan des premiers travaux sur les politiques sociales transformatrices, d’autres économistes africains se sont engagés dans le processus de construction d’une pensée

économique hétéro-doxe. Parmi eux figurent Carlos Lopes, Amady Aly Dieng, Mustapha Kassé, Guy Mhone, Yash Tandon, Habib El Malki, Mike Obadan, Mamadou Koulibaly, Chérif Salif Sy, Hakim Ben Hammouda, René N'Guettia Kouassi, Youcef Benabdallah, Demba Moussa Dembélé, Theresa Moyo, Said Adejumobi et bien d'autres que l'on ne peut tous nommer ici. La trajectoire de ces économistes a été marquée, à des degrés différents, par l'adhésion au Codesria et/ou leur attachement à son agenda largement imprégné d'une posture hétérodoxe impliquant plusieurs courants de pensée économique, dont le marxisme, le néokeynésianisme, l'institutionnalisme et le conventionnalisme. L'engagement du Codesria en faveur de la pensée économique hétérodoxe s'est affirmé avec discrétion et efficacité à travers les activités de formation, de recherche et de plaidoyer. S'agissant de la formation, les programmes du Codesria, en particulier les ateliers méthodologiques et les instituts thématiques annuels, ont constitué depuis leur instauration un espace de sensibilisation et d'orientation des jeunes chercheurs africains vers la remise en cause ou au moins la relativisation des idées véhiculées par le courant mainstream. Les lauréats de ces programmes forment aujourd'hui un véritable réseau de chercheurs porteurs et défenseurs des valeurs du Codesria dans les quatre coins du continent, voire au-delà. Beaucoup d'entre eux ont pris (ou sont en train de prendre) la relève avec détermination et enthousiasme.

Les projets de recherche financés par le Codesria dans le domaine économique se sont toujours inscrits dans une perspective d'ouverture hétérodoxe. Que ce soit dans le cadre des anciens groupes de travail (Groupes multinationaux de travail,

Groupes nationaux de travail, Réseaux de recherche comparative, Groupes transnationaux de travail) ou de l'actuelle initiative de recherche pour la construction du sens (MRI), pour ne citer que ces deux exemples, une importance capitale est apportée à la pluralité théorique et conceptuelle. Et pour assurer la diffusion des réflexions d'économistes africaines, le Codesria n'a jamais hésité à miser sur les moyens. Outre la célèbre revue *Afrique et Développement (Africa Development)* publiée depuis 1976 et orientée en partie vers les questions économiques, le Codesria s'est associé en 2015 avec la CEA (Commission économique des Nations Unies pour l'Afrique) pour mettre en place la *Revue des mutations en Afrique : réflexions sur les politiques et les pratiques (Journal of African Transformation : Reflections on policy and practice)*. Celle-ci se veut essentiellement une plateforme économique qui cherche à jeter un pont entre les chercheurs africains et les décideurs politiques. À ces deux canaux viennent s'ajouter la publication des livres à vocation économique et l'organisation de manifestations scientifiques tournées exclusivement ou en partie vers les problèmes et défis économiques auxquels l'Afrique est confrontée. Il en est ainsi des trois conférences organisées à la mémoire de l'économiste malawien Guy Mhone en 2007, 2008 et 2010.

Enfin, dans le cadre de ses actions de plaidoyer, le Codesria s'est régulièrement positionné en tant que défenseur du pluralisme économique au sein des universités africaines. Cela s'est manifesté de manière explicite ou implicite dans le programme sur l'enseignement supérieur. Une place importante y est accordée à deux principaux volets, qui s'inscrivent dans la logique de l'hétérodoxie économique : il

s'agit des libertés académiques et des curricula. Le Codesria plaide particulièrement pour la liberté pédagogique (article 20 de la Déclaration de Dar Es Salaam sur la liberté académique et la responsabilité sociale des universitaires, 1990) et le réajustement des programmes d'enseignement en fonction des besoins et de la réalité sociale, alors même que les départements d'économie, dans la quasi majorité des pays africains, ont largement tendance à privilégier la microéconomie, et par conséquent à abuser de la mathématisation des réalités, au détriment de la macroéconomie.

### **Un agenda riche en sujets économiques intellectuellement stimulants**

Contrairement à la majorité des think tanks, qui se contente souvent de s'aligner sur les positions idéologiques et/ou commerciales des bailleurs de fonds et réalise des recherches sur commande, le Codesria s'est toujours courageusement inscrit dans une logique d'autonomie en matière de réflexion et de choix des thématiques de recherche. Cela s'illustre parfaitement dans la définition des axes de recherche dédiés aux questions d'ordre économique. Outre leur fécondité et leur forte utilité pour les économies et les sociétés africaines, ces axes se caractérisent le plus souvent par une certaine sensibilité politique, une forte imbrication avec d'autres disciplines (multidisciplinarité), et des exigences épistémologiques et méthodologiques rigoureuses. En somme, il s'agit là, en quelque sorte, des caractéristiques qui interfèrent avec la construction de la réflexion critique.

Les thèmes économiques de haut niveau débattus dans le cadre des activités du Codesria ont évolué depuis 1973 en fonction de



l'évolution des faits observés et vécus par les Africains eux-mêmes. Mais en dépit de cette évolution, ces thèmes convergent globalement vers la même finalité; celle du développement économique du continent. Au début, les réflexions avaient porté essentiellement sur les premiers concepts forgés et popularisés par Samir Amin comme le développement inégal, le développement autocentré et le développement marxiste. D'autres thèmes connexes se sont naturellement et progressivement greffés à cette vision de développement. C'est le cas, par exemple, de l'accumulation du capital, de l'industrialisation de l'Afrique, de la question agraire, ou encore de l'endettement. Les travaux issus de ces réflexions étaient imprégnés d'histoire et marqués par un fort ancrage théorique. Ils constituent encore à ce jour un référentiel et un guide précieux pour approcher la question du développement en Afrique.

Durant les années quatre-vingt et quatre-vingt-dix, sans aucune remise en cause des paradigmes en vigueur, les réflexions économiques menées au sein du Codesria se sont concentrées sur les politiques économiques dans un contexte de crise profonde et d'implémentation des programmes d'ajustements structurels et, plus tard, des recommandations du consensus de Washington. Certes, la crise qui avait secoué les économies africaines a été douloureuse, y compris pour la communauté des chercheurs, mais en même temps, elle a offert une réelle opportunité scientifique aux économistes africains soucieux de construire une pensée économique autonome sur les problèmes structurels du développement du continent. Un consensus s'est rapidement dégagé autour de l'impossibilité pour les pays africains de réussir l'ajustement structurel de leurs économies tel que

préconisé par les experts du FMI. Au-delà des essais de compréhension des considérations techniques et opérationnelles des politiques d'ajustement, la réflexion s'est portée sur le questionnement des théories du développement concernant l'incapacité des économies africaines à construire des ponts de transition vers l'économie de marché.

À partir de la fin des années quatre-vingt-dix, nous avons assisté à un début de renouvellement de la pensée économique menée au sein du Codesria. Ce renouvellement a été favorisé par l'arrivée d'un nouveau secrétaire exécutif (Adebayo Olukoshi), l'effondrement du bloc de l'Est et l'élargissement, quoique timide, de l'espace des libertés académiques consécutif au déclenchement du processus de démocratisation en Afrique. La composante économique de l'agenda intellectuel du Codesria s'est alors enrichie, marquant, entre autres, une grande ouverture vers les sciences politiques. Le champ de réflexion sur les sujets économiques s'est progressivement élargi avec un ancrage empirique assez marqué et surtout une transversalité renforcée. La communauté des économistes est désormais encouragée à aborder les grands thèmes économiques en tenant compte des perspectives de genre, de génération, des inégalités, de l'écologie, de l'espace, et de bien d'autres encore.

Les résultats de cette mutation ne se sont pas fait attendre. Ainsi, Samir Amin s'est à nouveau distingué par ses réflexions très approfondies sur la crise et l'altermondialisme en mettant en valeur de nouvelles idées qui viennent enrichir ses œuvres déjà reconnues et largement partagées au sein de la communauté scientifique. Parallèlement, une véritable pensée critique sur la transformation économique et sociale s'est

construite autour de grands auteurs qui ont forgé un raisonnement économique solidement étayé, à l'instar de Thandika Mkandawire, Carlos Lopes et Jimi Adesina. À cela s'ajoutent les réflexions brillantes menées par les spécialistes africains de l'économie agricole, comme Sam Moyo, sur le foncier et la question agraire. Enfin, des analyses innovantes ont été menées sur les questions monétaires en Afrique. Elles ont été l'œuvre d'économistes chevronnés comme Mamadou Koulibaly, Hakim Ben Hammouda, Moustapha Kassé, Demba Moussa Dembélé et bien d'autres encore.

## Conclusion

En dépit des contraintes financières et de la nécessité de composer avec plusieurs disciplines relevant des sciences sociales, le Codesria a réussi le pari : celui de contribuer à la construction d'une pensée économique africaine par les Africains. Cependant, la bataille est loin d'être terminée, dans un contexte où les économistes d'inspiration hétérodoxe continuent d'être marginalisés dans les universités africaines et où les curricula des filières économiques continuent de subir la loi du courant orthodoxe. Le Codesria, fort de sa notoriété, de sa posture autonomiste et de son réseau d'économistes africains attachés à l'économie pluraliste, est mieux outillé pour entreprendre des actions encore plus audacieuses et collaboratives en faveur de la pensée économique hétérodoxe, tout en réhabilitant les savoirs économiques locaux.

## Note

1. Bien que Claude Ake ait une formation en sciences politiques, il s'est beaucoup investi dans l'analyse économique. Il a notamment publié en 1981 *Une économie politique de l'Afrique (A Political Economy of Africa)* Harlow, Longman).

# CODESRIA and the Humanities Crisis Pandemic: Fifty Years On

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## Introduction

This article is a brief reflection on CODESRIA's fiftieth anniversary since its establishment in 1973 and the institution's five decades of addressing the crisis in the humanities in Africa. This golden jubilee is not only a moment to celebrate CODESRIA's past intellectual achievements but also a time to contemplate alternative futures for the humanities, which have been steeped in crisis globally, much like a pandemic. The article describes how, over the last fifty years, CODESRIA has been confronting epistemic injustice by challenging colonially inherited humanities discourses and knowledge production through the promotion of epistemologies that are relevant to Africa.

Although decolonisation of knowledge has been central to CODESRIA's project, the crisis in the humanities remains endemic. This reflects a culture framed by colonial structures of thought and epistemologies of knowledge, and echoes categories of representation of the imperial past that are still strong, fifty years on. Despite CODESRIA addressing the humanities question in general, the pandemic-like crisis is becoming even more complicated as a consequence of major societal transformations brought about by globalisation

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forces and the dominant discourse of neoliberalism. And in spite of CODESRIA's promotion of relevant epistemologies and alternative futures in the humanities, the selective application of theoretical frameworks and analytical concepts remains stubbornly Euro/US-centric (see Lebakeng 2018; Prah 2016; Lauer and Anyidoho 2012; Bates, Mudimbe and O'Barr 1993).

Launching an application call for the 2020 Humanities Institute, CODESRIA summarised the crisis of humanities thus:

Over the years, teaching and research in the humanities in African universities has been on the decline, occasioned partly by external and national level policies advocating for more investments in STEM subjects. STEM subjects are presented as offering better choices for Africa's development. While there seems to be emerging agreement across the world that the humanities are and should constitute an important component of a higher education sector in developing societies, universities in Africa continue to underfund the humanities.

Consequently, the quality of teaching and research in the humanities has been undermined partly because the infrastructures for knowledge production in most institutions, including doctoral and post-doctoral programmes, are near collapse. In addition, little has been done to revise content in the traditional humanities to accommodate emerging areas of study and/or disciplines. The overall impact has been the devaluation of the critical role of the humanities as an interrogative force for human values, principles and history throughout most universities in the continent. There is therefore need for interventions to explore new theories and methods on which to ground relevant knowledge production in the humanities on the continent and possibly suggest ways of broadening the scope of the humanities in the continent's universities, beyond the traditional academic disciplines.<sup>1</sup>

This scenario has led scholars to intervene in the recovery and restoration of the role and relevance of the humanities in Africa (Crawford, Mai-Bornu and Landstrom 2021) and to address current disruptions and disequilibriums in the humanities that arise as a result of epistemic dependency (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018a and 2018b; Andrews and Okpanachi 2012). The ultimate goal is to decolonise the humanities by seeking

alternatives that address the urgent needs of African development (Wanjala 2022; Benyera 2022).

CODESRIA'S fiftieth anniversary, therefore, provides an opportunity to interrogate how the institution has intervened in the crisis of the humanities, by looking back to the future. To ask today how CODESRIA has engaged with this crisis and whether it offers potential solutions seems sensible and logical. But fifty years ago the question would not have been taken seriously, since at its establishment in 1973, CODESRIA was conceived as a social sciences institution meant to deal with the history, ideology, logic, strategies and structures of inherited colonial economic development in Africa (Amin et al. 1978). Having existed for half a century, now is the right time for a critical reflection on CODESRIA's interventions in African humanities and its endemic crisis.

### **The Humanities Crisis as Pandemic**

This article analyses the metaphorical framing of the crisis of the humanities as a pandemic. It claims that the discourse of the humanities crisis in Africa can be understood and explained best in pandemic language so as to make clear and distinct the troubled lives of the disciplines. Hence, the pandemic metaphor is used as an analytic tool to understand the crisis of humanities and to examine the health status of the disciplines and necessary interventions.

Although crisis of the humanities is a global problem, and while almost all universities that offer a liberal education across the world have experienced humanities crisis moments, many have had second

thoughts: they have realised the importance of the disciplines and redefined and redesigned their curricula to accommodate them (Arndt 2007). In Africa, however, the crisis remains malignant and malevolent, with its impact being felt more than anywhere else in the world. The endemic crisis is a threat to African cultures, civilisation and development that must be fought and won, much the same way a pandemic is confronted and defeated.

The motif of pandemic, therefore, is used in this article to question general inaction and passivity in the face of the humanities crisis in Africa. The crisis and the existential challenges it poses is intellectually dangerous for the continent. Its debilitating impact on individuals, institutions and society, causing the real death of disciplines in some cases, urgently requires. Whereas the violence behind medical aspects of a pandemic is life-threatening, the epistemic violence that the humanities crisis represents does not seem to attract similar attention. Yet, the crisis of humanities is, in a sense, a pandemic that is even more calamitous than a real disease. The humanities crisis becomes a metaphor for the crisis facing humanity.

Scholars of pandemic narratives, such as Sweed (2021) and Williams (2017), argue that disease has a paradigm-shifting effect on people's ideas, beliefs, value systems and social structures, as well as on political and religious entities. Therefore, to use the language and imagery of plague is to make sense not so much of a literal pestilence as of a crisis in the moral of the metaphor.

The use of metaphor enables easy communication and understanding of concepts, experiences and

problems by expressing, reflecting and reinforcing different ways of making sense of the world (Stanley et al. 2021; Semino, Demjén and Demmen 2018). Metaphor communicates more than literal language (Gibbs, Leggitt and Turner 2002; Marshak 1996). This is the basis for analysing the crisis of the humanities in pandemic metaphorical frames.

### **Bringing the Humanities In**

CODESRIA was conceived as a consequence of the 1964 Rockefeller Foundation Conference in Italy on economic research in postcolonial Africa (West 1965). The marginalisation and absence of Africans at that meeting led to the idea of a Pan-African organisation that would address the challenge (Mkandawire 1988). Formalised in 1973, CODESRIA prides itself as being the longest surviving intellectual institution that fosters collaboration between African scholars (Hoffmann 2017).

The conception and birth of CODESRIA also has to be contextualised against the Bandung Era and what was happening in the global South in general. According to Samir Amin (1994), the Bandung Era was the period roughly between 1955 and 1977 when many newly independent nations and collective nationalist movements struggling for independence in Asia and Africa began collaborating with other global movements in the hope of developing tools for anticolonial and anti-imperial resistance. This was part of a larger project that Amin described as disengagement and delinking from imperialism (Amin 1985; Campbell 2021). In 1955, twenty-nine Asian-African countries met in Bandung, Indonesia, to promote *Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation*



and to oppose colonialism or neocolonialism (Kuan-Hsing, Miao and Jack 1999; Scott 1999).

The desire to promote South–South collaboration for epistemic independence was felt early during decolonisation. Much later, the imperative for partnerships was reiterated:

The Collaborative Tri-continental Program was launched in 2005 by the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Asian Political and International Studies Association (APISA) with the purpose of enhancing the production of knowledge suitable for fostering high quality social science research building a Southern perspective on critical issues with the aim of contributing to the global debate of several issues. (APISA-CLACSO-CODESRIA 2010: 1)

Thus, CODESRIA's establishment in 1973 was motivated by achievements in both Asia and Latin America and came at a momentous period in the history of Africa: it was the first decade of independence and also the first decade of official experiment with Pan-Africanism. It was a time when the first generation of African scholars began to think critically, in reaction to Eurocentric perspectives, ideas and institutions, about the social sciences and the trajectory and project of the development of a continent that was divided territorially and intellectually for oppressive purposes (Chen and Ikegami 2016).

At the initial stages, cultural studies (as humanities) did not enjoy as much intellectual nourishment and epistemic enrichment as did the social sciences. CODESRIA's research and intellectual priorities

focused more on economic development (read social sciences) than the humanities. The symbiotic relationship between economic and cultural development as envisaged at the Bandung Conference in 1955 appeared to have been abandoned, at least for a while. Failure to appreciate the central role of the humanities in the economic development of Africa soon after independence starved the disciplines of distinctive, diverse and dynamic developments and the evolution necessary to confront the crisis of the humanities as a colonially inherited epistemic injustice.

In what Pillay (2017) calls 'the founding predicaments', CODESRIA faced the challenge of the difference between the social sciences and the humanities. For an institution that was established to fight against marginalisation, this benign discrimination of the humanities mirrored the initial centre-periphery problem of knowledge production and dissemination. That unfortunate fragmentation was a miniature mirror of Keim's (2010) centre-periphery model processes of social scientific knowledge production, diffusion, reception and communication, with scholars from the North constituting the centre of the disciplines, and those from the global South occupying a peripheral position. In CODESRIA, whereas the social sciences were mainstreamed, the humanities survived on the margins.

As a consequence, in the first decade of CODESRIA's existence, the humanities lived in the shadows of the social sciences with little intellectual investment. They were not acknowledged, cultivated or nurtured as necessary and active agents of African development. Meaningful insights from the

various complex dimensions and dynamics of humanities disciplines as valuable variables that could help to explain the socioeconomic development of Africa were lost. This may inadvertently have contributed to, or at least reinforced, the crisis.

Castryck-Naumann (2022) argues that the history of CODESRIA has to be situated in the broader context of international social science politics in the 1960s and 1970s. Its focus should be seen as a critical response, in fact a countermove, to the politics of UNESCO, which sought to take the lead in partnership with state governments in the founding of regional social science councils in Latin America, Africa and Asia as well as in initiating a transregional dialogue between them. While acknowledging the international dimension of the intellectual history of CODESRIA, 'the founding predicaments' and how they impacted take-off in the struggle for epistemic self-determination and the decolonisation of the humanities must also be considered.

Nonetheless, as a pragmatic and transforming institution, CODESRIA did not take long to abandon superficial differences between the humanities and social sciences. It evolved quickly and integrated and mainstreamed humanities into its intellectual project. The purely economic-oriented research approach that had been vigorously pursued in the institution's formative years was reappraised; now, the humanities occupy a high position in CODESRIA's transformative agenda of knowledge production for African development (Meneses 2016). This agenda has to be framed beyond the crisis of the humanities as epistemic dependence.

## The Crisis of the Humanities and Epistemic Dependence

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014 and 2018a), Africa as a site of knowledge production has suffered and continues to be afflicted by historical and contemporary epistemic dependence. Defined as the reliance on and persistent and unwarranted exclusion from practices of knowledge production, epistemic dependence is equated to epistemic oppression, which is an injustice (Sertler 2022) that is discriminatory and harmful to the epistemic agency of sense-making (Dunne and Kotsonis 2023). Epistemic injustice is identifiable by five conditions: first, the disadvantage condition, where the knower is victimised, discriminated against and marginalised; second, the prejudice condition, which involves prejudices and stereotypes; third, the stakeholder condition, which means denial and exclusion from decision-making processes; fourth, the epistemic condition, where the knower is harmed; and fifth, the social justice condition of being disregarded through structural inequalities and social inequalities (Byskov 2021; Dladla 2021).

Epistemic dependency results in an imbalance in the production of social sciences across societies and the resultant division of labour between producers and consumers of such knowledge (Alatas 2003). As an epistemic inequality, the 'knowers' have more recognition and privileges than 'others' (Alatas 2006). This problem of epistemic dependency is far more devastating in Africa and is reflected in the continent's current and vast education systems.

Not only was the history of Africa disputed or appropriated and the humanity of Africans denied, but

also the continent's cultures were belittled and oppressed on a major scale (Ahluwalia and Nursey-Bray 1997). This is the problem of postcolonial knowledge production in Africa and the context for the establishment of the CODESRIA mandate (Olukoshi 2003), which is the struggle for epistemic independence (Murunga and Fuh 2018). Mpofu (2013) argues that the colonial 'knowledge' of Africa, generated by colonists as part of imperial designs, must be resisted, negated and rebelled against.

Over the past fifty years, a critical mass of CODESRIA intellectuals have examined and engaged with the humanities in Africa, demonstrating at the same time that the disciplines are facing a complex crisis (Potgieter and Kamwendo 2014). These and other scholars have produced narratives that seriously interrogate the humanities question and demonstrate a quest for their recognition, reform, legibility, legitimacy, independence and identity. Through research and publications, the scholars have spotlighted an epistemic dimension to the humanities crisis. *A key theme that runs through much of their work is that Africa had and has knowledge, ideas and skills that are valuable and therefore impactful to society. Yet the educational relevance and academic significance of these sources of knowledge have been debased as a result of the encounter between Africa and the world and the resultant experience of marginalisation of the former in universities and society. It is this epistemic injustice that the scholars are challenging.* This is the background against which to contextualise CODESRIA's intervention in the humanities crisis.

To overcome the colonial challenge, Africans have to 'decolonise their mind' and cast aside the implied inferiority complex that was induced by colonialism and which has persisted till now, particularly among Africa's social scientists (see Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986). As Meneses (2016: 7) cautions:

... the colonial imprint in our societies is not a finished business, we have to argue for new epistemologies. These new epistemologies cannot arise from the traditional disciplines of the social sciences and humanities, as this division reinstalls a specific approach opted out by Euro-centric scholarship,

By challenging established colonial epistemologies and pursuing new radically different ways that make sense and give meaning to marginalised African knowledge, CODESRIA is confronting the crisis of the humanities in multiple and complex ways.

## Confronting Epistemic Oppression

The humanities crisis in Africa is one way in which epistemic oppression and knowledge dependence play out. It has its roots in colonialism and unwarrantedly excludes and obstructs Africans, as epistemic agents, from theories and practices of knowledge production.

Dotson (2018) opines that epistemic injustice is not the exception but the rule in colonial epistemologies and is designed to pervade the systems that produce it. Therefore, the continent needs to liberate itself by pursuing and promoting alternative theories, methods and practices that advance research which advances African interests, needs and priorities (Andrews and Okpanachi 2012). Thus, the CODESRIA project seeks to locate Africa within the

global knowledge system through epistemic independence.

As CODESRIA became more aware of the need to embrace the humanities more closely, this focus grew in strength and size (Aina 1993). CODESRIA's support for the humanities led to the initiation of a Humanities Institute and establishment of an annual thematic institute on 'The Humanities in Africa'. These interventions were in response to the steady decline in teaching and research in the humanities in African universities. The Institute, amongst other things, aimed at exploring new theories and methods on which to ground relevant knowledge production in the humanities on the continent and suggest ways of broadening the scope of the humanities in the continent's universities, beyond the traditional academic disciplines (Hoffmann 2019; Sall, Bangirana and Onoma 2015).

The transformations that CODESRIA has undergone have changed the focus and maturity of the humanities in Africa enormously. Adopting a broad transdisciplinary and innovative approach has resulted in the humanities growing rapidly in popularity and impact. CODESRIA is practising an applied epistemology that questions and critically analyses bases, forms and structures of knowledge production in the humanities in Africa (Thondhlana and Garwe 2021). Whether epistemic oppression is put centre stage thematically or is made the backdrop for any publication, CODESRIA is confronting epistemic dependency through research. CODESRIA's research and publications engage with the politics of knowledge production and therefore are a form of resistance to the colonial

epistemologies that oppress and suppress the contribution of African epistemic resources.

There is an elaborate literature on the need for epistemic independence and academic identity in Africa. As a result, a new and transformed understanding of the role of the humanities has emerged, which in turn has produced a better conceptualisation of the crisis of the disciplines (Andrews and Okpanachi 2012). What becomes clear from the literature is that knowledge dependence is a consequence of the history of colonisation with its attendant colonial forms of education and neoliberal hegemony.

For much of the half-century of its existence, CODESRIA has been reflecting critically on the histories, trajectories and conditions of the humanities in Africa. Some of its key contributions are an understanding of the evolution and development of the crisis of the humanities. The research it has conducted runs through a number of programmes, including graduate research competitions, research grants for senior scholars, networking and participation in a number of collaborative research projects, research methodology training programmes, and holding conferences, workshops and seminars at which humanities scholars present their findings, most of which appear in various publications. Thus, the institution has been reconceptualising and reorienting the humanities as an epistemic empowerment strategy for African development. Hence, CODESRIA's footprint in confronting the crisis of humanities as a pathway to African independence and development cannot be ignored.

## **Epistemic Empowerment Beyond the Humanities Crisis**

CODESRIA has exerted epistemic influence by discrediting the colonial epistemologies implicit in the crisis of the humanities. This influence is a consequence of possessing and practising 'epistemic virtues' as intellectual traits that equip epistemic agents in their action (Elgin 2013). These traits include open-mindedness, rigour, sensitivity to evidence, rules, methods and standards.

Global donors, however, as Shahjahan (2016) cautions, use their financial influence to perpetuate epistemic oppression through their 'good intentions', their versions of 'development' and the discourse of the internationalisation of higher education as an unequivocal good, which in turn reproduces dependencies and constrains local decision-making (see also Walker and Martinez-Vargas 2020). As large donors and powerful agencies set their research parameters, they shape global higher education research also (Sriprakash, Tikly and Walker 2020).

According to Gebremariam et al. (2023: 1), Africa's position in the global knowledge production ecosystem needs to change significantly. Even more critical is the central place that such a repositioning is bound to have in upholding African dignity. This is the obligation that CODESRIA has been grappling with in the last fifty years: the struggle for epistemic independence and placing Africa at the centre of knowledge production and dissemination so that the continent may impact the world through its knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018a and 2018b).



Throughout its existence, CODESRIA has been responding to the crisis of the humanities as a moral and intellectual obligation. This it does by setting research agendas dictated by Africa's development needs. The institution's decolonial thinking entails epistemic delinking from Eurocentric knowledge, not by empty theoretical moves but through concrete intellectual resistance against colonial hegemony and epistemic violence. Confronting and contesting colonial epistemologies and their limitations, acknowledging the validity and recognising the legitimacy of African humanities as academic agendas and situating them within a new independent epistemological frame, is a way of empowering them.

Intellectual advances and milestones made in the humanities as a result of the CODESRIA tradition have generated a better understanding of the humanities crisis. CODESRIA has made simple the complex multidisciplinary nature of the humanities in Africa. The idea of the humanities has been rethought and reconceptualised and a new sense of African identity and alternative futures is emerging, growing and blossoming on the continent (Olukoshi and Nyamnjoh 2006). Using a variety of approaches to explore the reciprocal influence of the humanities from a broader international context highlights Africanist ideals and quest for renewal, so that no great space in the global epistemic hierarchy is left to the imaginations and designs of a few Eurocentric scholars. The proper way to guarantee the future of the humanities in Africa is to point out the blanks and shortcomings that have prevented them from reaching their full

disciplinary status among scientific fields (Zezeza 1997). By putting forward a different version and pursuing alternative humanities, the value of CODESRIA now can rightly be understood as a liberation of the disciplines from distorted historical interpretations and the conquest of epistemic colonialism (Aina 2023; Smit and Chetty 2014).

Over the last fifty years, CODESRIA has worked tirelessly to historicise the humanities and give them their rightful place in African universities and society. As a result, there exist today considerable academic resources of various types, based on differing approaches (Lauer and Anyidoho 2012). Clearly, CODESRIA has been claiming intellectual autonomy for the humanities in Africa, as is evident in its robust research, variety of publications and plethora of intellectual meetings.

The CODESRIA School is highly ideological and works in the interest of African universities and society. The CODESRIA approach is prolific, progressive and pragmatic, contesting and challenging colonial intellectual legacies of the humanities that served the interests of dominant corporations and institutions. It is critical, innovative and promotes multimethodological and multiperspective alternative futures concerned with complex and transformative humanities for development (see Murunga, Onoma and Ogachi 2020). These empowering approaches by CODESRIA provide a critical vision of the practice, creative production and use of the humanities beyond the crisis.

Notwithstanding CODESRIA's achievements, it is important to

note that challenging coloniality epistemologically in knowledge production and decolonising knowledge through education is difficult (Mpofu 2013). Decolonising universities, and particularly the humanities, in our case, is about envisioning alternative futures by calling into question the particularities of colonialism in the disciplines. This can be done by analysing how Africa's colonial past continues to inform humanities epistemologies, methodologies and pedagogies.

Efforts at questioning the intellectual universalism of knowledge production should be aimed at aligning the epistemic location of Africa and its people so that they are empowered to serve the present realities and interests of the continent. At the same time, the quest for epistemological liberation and resurrection of the knowledge paradigm in and of Africa should continue contributing to global knowledge (Nyamnjoh 2012).

The search for alternative imaginaries of African humanities should not be encumbered by intellectual nationalism, essentialism or other impeding circumstances that may fail to recognise and acknowledge the complex entanglements of global epistemologies and modern humanities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013; Mignolo 2011). In any case, this is the intellectual business for which CODESRIA was established. The search for alternative humanities futures should be an intellectual process that is marked by a strategy of qualitative change from the precursors and roots of the current crisis towards new formulations of identity, relevance and significance for Africa and beyond.

CODESRIA's fifty years are a watershed between the past and the future. Faith in the next fifty years is based on the fact that few institutions of independent intellectual thought are as well, or as affectionately, remembered as CODESRIA is. Fifty years is a moment of transition in CODESRIA'S history that was in its foundational phase marked by disciplinary experimentation and crises—including the humanities. The next fifty years should be a new phase in the humanities at CODESRIA, an era characterised by a tremendous sense of measured optimism. History provides experience to the destination that humanities in Africa should aspire to.

## Conclusion

This article has reflected on the crisis of the humanities in Africa, by drawing comparisons with a pandemic and by placing the crisis within its broader epistemological contexts. The crisis of humanities is not only a function of education but is also about how African society is structured, how academic power is wielded in the name of role and relevance, and how disciplines are categorised and modelled.

The focus in the article has been on CODESRIA'S fifty years of deconstructing approaches that have contributed to the crisis of the humanities, and the interventions it has adopted to demonstrate the relevance of the humanities in African development. Historical awareness has been used to offer some insights into the crisis.

Since its establishment in 1973, CODESRIA has initiated and sustained a long narrative of intellectual debate on the humanities question in Africa. It has encouraged scholars of disparate disciplinary persuasions to engage

in various intellectual activities that confront epistemological injustice in the form of academic oppression and academic dependency. The former often neglects and fails to appreciate difference and diversity, and the latter relies heavily on Western epistemologies that ignore African agency in knowledge production. Most of these injustices have created and exacerbated the crisis of the humanities on the continent. By nurturing and creating a critical mass of intellectuals with a distinctive sense of epistemic independence and identity beyond the traditional Eurocentric limits inscribed by imperialism and colonialism, CODESRIA's interventions are providing an invigorating corrective to the colonial legacy of epistemic marginality (Mungwini 2017), while at the same time mainstreaming African identity in global humanities discourses.

Notwithstanding the numerous challenges, CODESRIA's positive and impressive humanities trajectory in African scholarship reflects seriously the desire to rethink and shape the futures of the disciplines and the imperative to reimagine alternatives. While a lot has been achieved in understanding the crisis, more remains to be done. This calls for rethinking the humanities and reimagining alternative futures that reconfigure and position the humanities as critical disciplines that have obligations to African sensitivities. The CODESRIA project, then, should be read as an African humanities becoming, a discipline-based identity in process guided by reconstructive aspirations, transformed by historical forces, contextualised by existential realities and anchored in development exigencies.

CODESRIA's fiftieth anniversary is a key moment worth celebrating in the institution's life. It has been demonstrated in this article that the institution has the expertise and experience to provide the intellectual gravitas to deal with the fundamental theoretical and conceptual issues that confront the humanities. This history of bountiful knowledge production and dissemination forms a basis for renewed impetus and optimism in the coming years. The institution's legacy of confronting the crisis in the humanities and situating it in the context of African development inspires hope that the futures of the disciplines are promising.

## Note

1. <https://codesria.org/2020-humanities-institute-call-for-director-resource-persons-and-laureates/>

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## L'Afrique et le Codesria pour mémoire ! Quels défis pour aujourd'hui ?

**C**réé en 1973, le Codesria commémorera au courant de cette année 2023 le cinquantième anniversaire de sa fondation, notamment lors de sa 16e Assemblée générale programmée en décembre.

Cette rencontre regroupera nombre de facultés et d'organismes de recherche africains ainsi que d'autres participants institutionnels ou individuels et membres associés dont les travaux ciblent le domaine des sciences humaines et sociales consacrées aux études africaines. L'Assemblée générale, qui constitue l'organe suprême de décision de notre organisation, se chargera notamment de déterminer les grandes lignes liées à l'orientation intellectuelle de l'institution et ses programmes prioritaires de recherche. Le Codesria aura pour cela à s'appuyer sur une riche expérience insufflée au cours de ces cinq décennies écoulées par les aînés fondateurs, ainsi que par des centaines de chercheurs, dont certains ne sont malheureusement plus de ce monde et à qui nous ne manquerons pas de rendre l'hommage qu'ils auront largement mérité. Il s'agira de ne pas perdre de vue que durant ce demi-siècle d'existence, le Codesria et ses institutions partenaires auront largement été représentés sur la scène des savoirs, à propos et autour de l'Afrique, et cela, par leurs rencontres scientifiques sur les thèmes les plus variés et souvent innovants, ainsi que par l'édition

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d'un grand nombre de livres et articles de revues, publiés en plusieurs langues de travail usitées dans le continent et disséminés en Afrique et ailleurs. Ces activités auront pour beaucoup contribué à fédérer, à travers notre espace de prédilection ou même ailleurs, et à démultiplier les compétences susceptibles d'éclairer le devenir de l'Afrique et des sociétés qui la composent. Il s'agira au cours de cette 16e Assemblée générale de revenir sur le passé de notre continent non à des fins contemplatives et narcissiques, mais pour comprendre le chemin parcouru depuis que nous sommes retrouvés absorbés à travers les conditions que nous savons dans le tourbillon d'un système de domination et d'universalisation centré sur le nord de la planète, réduisant ainsi notre espace de vie à une vaste périphérie d'une histoire qui donnait l'impression de se jouer ailleurs.

Il faudra aussi analyser comment, loin de constituer un corpus amorphe et docile envers le système de domination qui enserrait le monde dès la phase de première colonisation allant du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, pour se généraliser

avec l'émergence du système impérialiste à partir de la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'Afrique a toujours constitué un centre de résistance et même d'élaboration de contre-projets ciblant l'accès à un monde plus juste. De nos jours, ce processus d'ensemble semble rebondir avec les changements politiques touchant notre continent et qui révéleraient qu'une nouvelle étape serait en train de poindre à l'horizon. Cette 16e Assemblée générale devra se saisir de l'occasion pour réfléchir aux nouvelles tâches et objectifs qui permettraient au Codesria et à ses partenaires d'aider à expliciter ce nouveau vécu en contribuant à en préciser les perspectives.

### L'émergence du système colonial

On sait depuis Marx notamment et son œuvre *Le Capital* comment la première colonisation a constitué l'un des moyens privilégiés de la phase d'accumulation primitive du capital, aux côtés des processus, en Europe même, d'expropriation de la population campagnarde et du système des dettes publiques. On peut lire ainsi dans la 8<sup>e</sup> section du livre I du *Capital* :

«La découverte des contrées aurifères et argentifères de l'Amérique, la réduction des indigènes en esclavage, leur enfouissement dans les mines ou leur extermination, les commencements de conquête et de pillage des Indes orientales et

la transformation de l'Afrique en une sorte de garenne commerciale pour la chasse aux peaux noires, voilà les procédés idylliques d'accumulation primitive du capital qui signalent l'ère capitaliste à son aurore; aussitôt après éclate la guerre mer-cantile; elle a le globe entier pour théâtre.»

Marx pouvait préciser plus loin :

«De nos jours, la suprématie industrielle implique la suprématie commerciale, mais à l'époque manufacturière proprement dite, c'est la suprématie commerciale qui donne la suprématie industrielle. De là le rôle prépondérant que joua le régime colonial.» (Marx 1969:1960)

Le passage à la phase de l'impérialisme a lui-même fait l'objet de larges débats, notamment à travers les thèses de Lénine et celles de Rosa Luxemburg. Nous nous contenterons ici de signaler que l'impérialisme, qui apparaît comme une généralisation du système colonial avec prédominance du processus d'exportation des capitaux, semble émerger et devenir dominant à partir de la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec comme points de repère la crise capitaliste de 1873 et le partage du monde, qui s'accélère en 1884-1885 avec le dépeçage de l'Afrique lors de la conférence de Berlin, en se poursuivant dans la première moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle avec notamment les deux guerres mondiales.

Les peuples du sud de la planète vont bien sûr imaginer des formes de résistance à cette suprématie dont le nord de la planète va bénéficier, en usant pour les asservir toujours plus, et ce, dès les débuts de l'économie de traite et du commerce triangulaire.

En fait, si l'esclavage constituait une pratique qui vit le jour très tôt dans l'histoire, et ce, à l'échelle de l'humanité, l'Afrique n'en

deviendra sans doute la source d'extorsion privilégiée qu'à partir de l'émergence, au cours du Moyen Âge, d'une traite orientale, marquée notamment, dans l'Empire abbasside de la seconde moitié du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle, par la révolte des Zandj du Bas-Irak. L'usage massif à des fins productives commencera cependant avec, depuis la fin du Moyen Âge et le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec un top aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, la traite occidentale liée à l'accumulation primitive du capitalisme. Il s'agissait du fameux commerce triangulaire qui inaugura le pillage de l'Afrique, en premier lieu dans le domaine des ressources humaines. Cette période fut bien entendu marquée par des révoltes, dont la plus célèbre à Saint-Domingue en 1791, à l'origine de la première République noire, sera dirigée en Haïti par Toussaint-Louverture (1801-1802). Le joug colonial en Afrique allait cependant s'accroître, atteignant son paroxysme avec la tenue de la conférence de Berlin (1884-1885). En fait, des puissances européennes avaient longé les côtes africaines dès les XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles, y installant des enclaves à partir des XV<sup>e</sup>, XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles comme celles instaurées par les Portugais aux îles du Cap-Vert ou à São Tomé-et-Príncipe, celles des Hollandais avec les possessions des Boers en Afrique du Sud. Ils seront suivis par les Français et les Anglais en Égypte (à partir de 1797), ainsi que, toujours par les Français, en 1830 en Algérie, puis en Tunisie en 1881 et au Maroc en 1918.

C'est la rencontre de Berlin qui allait vraiment mobiliser toute l'Europe en vue du dépeçage de l'Afrique. Tout le continent sera bientôt convoité et ses territoires répartis entre la Grande-Bretagne, la France, le Portugal, la Belgique,

l'Espagne, l'Italie et l'Allemagne (pour de courtes périodes, il est vrai, pour ces deux dernières).

### **Les premières actions de résistance à la colonisation**

Si l'origine du traité esclavagiste occidental remonte au moins au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle avec les Portugais comme précurseurs, l'occupation directe des territoires va s'étendre progressivement avant de connaître une accélération au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Après une phase d'exploration et de reconnaissance des territoires à travers notamment les pistes fluviales, la conférence de Berlin va réellement lancer la course au dépeçage de l'Afrique. S'il apparaît que jusqu'en 1876 les Européens n'occupaient qu'environ 10 % du territoire africain, il ne leur faudra désormais que quelques années pour faire main basse sur le continent. Selon des chiffres repris par des auteurs, entre 1884 et 1900, le territoire colonial allait désormais se répartir comme suit :

- l'Angleterre, 3,7 millions de miles carrés avec une population de 57 millions d'habitants, notamment en Afrique australe, au Nigeria, au Kenya et au Ghana;
- pour la France, 3,6 millions de miles carrés avec 36,5 millions d'habitants, englobant le Sénégal et l'Afrique du Nord, mais aussi la Côte d'Ivoire, le Sahel, et en Afrique équatoriale, et à Madagascar;
- pour l'Allemagne, 1 million de miles carrés avec 14,7 millions d'habitants, dans des pays comme le Cameroun, le Sud-Ouest africain et le Tanganyka (actuelle Tanzanie);



- pour la Belgique, 900 000 miles carrés avec 30 millions d’habitants. Bien sûr, le bassin du Congo, et le Rwanda-Burundi;
- et enfin, le Portugal, 800 000 miles carrés et 9 millions d’habitants. Le Cap-Vert et la Guinée-Bissau, São Tomé-et-Príncipe et, bien entendu, l’Angola et le Mozambique.

Ce à quoi il faudra ajouter les tentatives italiennes dans la première moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle dans des pays tels que : Libye, la Somalie, l’Érythrée et l’Éthiopie. Après les défaites allemande et italienne lors des guerres mondiales, leurs possessions seront disséminées autrement.

Cette colonisation du continent qui transitera par plusieurs étapes sera, bien entendu, jalonnée de massacres, de génocides et autres actions répressives, dont témoignent, depuis le commerce triangulaire, le Code noir promulgué en 1685 par le roi de France Louis XIV (et étendu ensuite à toutes les Antilles et à la Louisiane), le Code de l’indigénat expérimenté en 1881 en Algérie, et généralisé par les Français en 1887 à toutes les colonies, et le travail forcé, sans oublier, bien entendu, le système de l’Apartheid, en Afrique du Sud, mais aussi ailleurs.

Les populations africaines n’accepteront jamais un pareil système de domination et d’exploitation, comme en témoignent les nombreuses révoltes suscitées contre les Européens et leurs corps expéditionnaires, avec bien entendu, en retour, la chasse et l’extermination des populations, à travers notamment la destruction de leurs ressources et la confiscation de leurs terres agricoles et de parcours.

Les Africains s’appuyaient pour l’essentiel sur les structures pré-capitalistes, telles que les tribus et parfois les proto-États plus ou moins constitués, la référence à l’idéologie religieuse, qu’elle soit d’origine ethnique ou d’origine islamique avec les réseaux confrériques.

Ces résistances et les conséquences qu’elles engendrèrent pour le continent ont pour l’essentiel été abordées et analysées dans des ouvrages, écrits ou dirigés, qu’on retrouvera dans la bibliographie qui clôturera ce texte. Nous nous contenterons donc ici de reprendre une recension non exhaustive établie par Elikia M’bokolo<sup>1</sup>.

Principales insurrections et révoltes en Afrique noire à l’âge de l’impérialisme :

- 1881 : Insurrection du Mahdi au Soudan
- Insurrections des Baoulé en Côte d’Ivoire (1881-1882)
- 1885 : Insurrection de Mamadou Lamine au Sénégal
- 1887 : Au Nigeria, capture de Jaja suivie de sa déportation
- 1889-1991 : Soulèvement contre les Portugais au Mozambique
- 1892 : Béhanzin contre les Français au Dahomey (Bénin)
- 1893 : Guerre anglo-ndebele en Rhodésie du Sud (Zimbabwe)
- 1895 : Les Français maîtres de Madagascar
- 1896 : Guerre d’indépendance en Rhodésie du Sud
- 1897 : Le royaume de Nupe (Nigeria) en guerre contre les Anglais
- 1898 : Nouveau soulèvement du Mahdi au Soudan
- 1899 : Insurrection dans les Somalies
- Insurrection au Niger
- 1900 : Mort de Rabah au Niger
- Révolte achanti en Côte-de-l’Or (Ghana)

- 1903 : Révolte des Azande et Mandja en Afrique centrale
- 1904 : Insurrection du Sud-Est malgache Tanganyika, insurrection Maji-Maji (Tanzanie)
- 1905 : Révolte zouloue au Natal
- Révolte des Hereros en Afrique du Sud-Ouest (Namibie)
- 1908 : Insurrection en Côte d’Ivoire
- 1911-1915 : Mouvement ovembo en Angola du Sud
- 1909-1914 : « Pacification » de la Côte d’Ivoire
- 1912 : Soulèvements au Cameroun
- 1911-1917 : Résistance tutsie et hutue au Ruanda et en Urundi (Rwanda et Burundi)
- 1914-1918 : Révolte des Holli et Somba au Dahomey et au Togo
- 1927-1931 : Révolte des Baya en Oubangui-Chari (Centrafrique)
- 1931 : Révolte de l’Urundi (Burundi) et des Pende au Congo belge

Sans vouloir tout réduire à l’héroïsme individuel, celui des chefs notamment ayant dirigé des insurrections, on devra ici rendre hommage au guerrier zoulou Tchaka (1787-1828) qui avait galvanisé la résistance contre les Boers, mais aussi aux rôles du Mahdi (1844-1885), de Mamadou Lamine au Soudan (1840-1887), de Jaja au Nigeria (1821-1891), de Béhanzin au Dahomey (1845-1906), ou de Rabah au Soudan, au Nigeria (Bornou) et dans le Niger (1842-1900) et de quelques autres, tels El Hadj Omar (1796-1864) dans le Mali et le Haut-Niger, et Samory Touré (1830-1900), dans une région entre la Guinée, le Mali et la Côte d’Ivoire.

Nous nous permettrons de compléter au moins partiellement ces indications en rappelant pour l’Afrique du Nord les faits de résistance qui s’étaleront tout au long du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle en Algérie (dirigés notamment par l’émir Abdelkader, puis El Mokrani et

Cheikh El Haddad, mais aussi en Égypte, en Tunisie, en Libye avec Omar al-Mokhtar ou les Senouci et au Maroc avec, en particulier, l'insurrection du Rif dirigée par Abdelkrim. Toutes ces formes de résistance s'appuyaient cependant pour l'essentiel sur les structures traditionnelles, même lorsqu'elles essayaient parfois d'innover en tentant de bâtir des structures étatiques. Des événements et changements internationaux d'importance majeure vont toute-fois sillonner la première moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et donner naissance à de nouvelles formes de lutte.

### **Les changements mondiaux et les nouvelles formes de lutte : le combat politique à l'ère de Bandung et de la première décolonisation**

Les formes traditionnelles de résistance, qui auront démontré la vitalité de la résistance que recèle le continent, ne viendront pourtant pas à bout de la pénétration coloniale qui, au contraire, va se démultiplier avec l'expansion des modes d'exploitation capitaliste. Ces derniers vont articuler la férocité dans l'expropriation des producteurs agraires et la mise en œuvre du travail forcé à la consolidation d'une nouvelle division internationale du travail basée sur le pacte colonial : le sud de la planète étant cantonné à la production de matières premières et produits agricoles, tandis que le nord dominateur gardera le monopole de la production industrielle et de l'innovation technologique. Parallèlement aux voies fluviales désormais largement explorées, va ainsi voir le jour un réseau de routes et de voies ferrées permettant l'accès aux ports qui voient le jour dans le sillage colonial pour relier les « périphéries » africaines aux

métropoles européennes, la main-d'œuvre étant fournie par les Africains au prix de la perte de centaines de milliers de personnes qui mourront d'épuisement ou succomberont à des maladies.

La spécialisation et la monoproduction agricole ou minière vont se généraliser, comme ce fut le cas pour le Togo et le Nigeria, avec la production d'huile de palme, ainsi que de la Gambie et du Sénégal pour les arachides, la Côte-de-l'or (Ghana) et la Côte d'Ivoire pour le cacao. En 1938, l'Afrique produisait 97,8 % des diamants du monde, 45,5 % de l'or, 75 % du cobalt, 37,6 % du manganèse, 40 % du chrome, 33,3 % du vanadium, 21,3 % du cuivre et 12,5 % de l'étain. Durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la Grande-Bretagne aura par ailleurs été approvisionnée par l'Afrique pour 80 % de la bauxite importée, 87 % du caoutchouc, 80 % du minerai de fer et plus de 75 % du tungstène<sup>2</sup>.

Peu à peu, les populations à l'origine de ces productions matérielles vont, à leur corps défendant, s'initier à l'activité syndicale et politique, le tout étant favorisé par des changements induits à l'échelle mondiale telles les deux Guerres mondiales — qui verront la mobilisation de centaines de milliers de personnes et peut-être de millions pour les besoins des conflits puis de la reconstruction en Europe même —, la Révolution russe de 1917, qui ébranlera le cours du monde, ou encore la diffusion d'idées liées au socialisme, au panafricanisme ou au panarabisme.

Dès les lendemains de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la conscience nationale en Afrique, qui jusqu'ici semblait encore souvent latente, va connaître une poussée d'accélération avec d'importantes révoltes qui

occasionneront des massacres, par les armées coloniales, de dizaines de milliers de personnes. Parmi les plus notoires, le cas en Algérie en mai 1945 où s'affirmaient des organismes politiques tels le Parti du peuple algérien (PPA) ou les Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté (AML), en 1947 à Madagascar où s'activait le Mouvement national pour l'indépendance (MNIM), et encore, à partir de 1952-1953, au Kenya où l'action de l'Union nationale africaine du Kenya (KANU), avec Jomo Kenyatta, interagit avec la révolte des Mau-Mau.

Durant les mêmes années et alors que commence à s'affirmer la politique d'apartheid en Afrique australe, imposée par les minorités d'origine européenne, un nouveau dynamisme national semble s'exprimer avec l'émergence du Rassemblement démocratique africain et de partis proches en Afrique occidentale, du parti Bataka ougandais, du parti de la Convention du peuple du Ghana, ou encore de nombreux groupes communistes et autres se situant sur la gauche de l'échiquier politique. La phase des guerres de libération va aussi commencer à prendre forme, d'abord au Maghreb, et notamment le 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 1954 en Algérie avec le Front de libération nationale (FLN), puis à partir de 1955 au Cameroun avec l'Union des populations camerounaises, pour s'étendre plus tard aux colonies portugaises. Cette flambée va ébranler la colonisation, qui tente une opération d'indépendance octroyée et « sous surveillance » en 1958-1960, parfois combattue, comme ce fut le cas pour les Guinéens avec Sékou Touré et les Maliens avec Modibo Keita. Dans les anciennes possessions britanniques, le processus a déjà commencé avec des pays comme l'Égypte, où émergera à partir

de 1952, et encore plus de 1956, la personnalité de Nasser; il atteindra en 1959 le Ghana dirigé par Kwame Nkrumah, continuant en 1960 au Nigeria avec Azikiwe et en 1961 au Tanganyika (future Tanzanie) avec Julius Nyerere, puis en 1963 au Kenya, ainsi que dans d'autres pays. Il s'agira de ne pas perdre de vue aussi les assassinats du Congolais Patrice Lumumba en 1960 ou du Camerounais Félix Moumié en 1961 et les longues luttes qui mèneront à des indépendances plus tardives dans les colonies portugaises et en Afrique australe.

Malgré des coups d'État qui perturberont les projets progressistes issus des mouvements nationaux et des luttes d'indépendance, on pourra dire que l'Afrique aura durant cette période accompli des progrès remarquables qui devront beaucoup aux vainqueurs de Diên Biên Phu en Indochine (en mai 1954), et aux architectes en avril 1955 de la conférence de Bandung, qui marquera une ère nouvelle pour les peuples d'Asie et d'Afrique. Celle-ci pourra, de manière instable, se poursuivre jusqu'aux années 1970, avec le IV<sup>e</sup> Sommet de la conférence des non-alignés qui se tient en septembre 1973 à Alger, qui a vu la participation de 75 États et de différentes organisations, mais aussi avec, la même année, la Guerre d'Octobre au Moyen-Orient et l'envol qui s'ensuivra des cours des matières premières. À signaler aussi, l'accès de la Chine populaire à l'ONU en 1971, ainsi que la mémorable 29<sup>e</sup> Assemblée générale ouverte en 1974. Caractérisée par un discours du leader palestinien Yasser Arafat ainsi que par la revendication clairement énoncée par les non-alignés d'un nouvel ordre économique mondial. Évidemment, de grande importance aussi, à cette occasion, l'expulsion de l'enceinte

des Nations unies du représentant du régime d'apartheid en Afrique du Sud, mesure qui contribuera à son effondrement final avec, en 1994, l'élection à la présidence de la République de Nelson Mandela.

L'évolution d'ensemble est loin cependant de s'avérer irréversible, comme l'annonce dès septembre 1973 le putsch organisé contre le régime progressiste d'Allende au Chili, l'assassinat la même année à Conakry de Amilcar Cabral et, plus tard, dans les années 1980 et 1990, celui de Thomas Sankara (en 1987), le génocide du Rwanda (1994) et la deuxième guerre du Congo (1998-2003), avec entre-temps, à la jointure des années 1980 et 1990, l'effondrement de l'URSS, la tentative dans les années 1990 de déstabilisation en Algérie, et celle, réussie à partir de 2011 en Libye (et un assassinat encore, celui de Kadhafi), avec extension en Syrie et à toute la zone sahélienne.

C'est cependant de cette dernière région que semblent, depuis les années 2020, jaillir de nouveaux développements. Avec quels défis pour le Codesria ?

### **L'Afrique et le Codesria aujourd'hui : nouveaux enjeux, nouveaux défis à relever**

Si, dès l'expression des premières formes de résistance à la colonisation, depuis l'émergence des mouvements nationaux sous leur forme moderne et l'accès aux indépendances, l'Afrique sem-ble, au-delà de certains désenchantements et pour l'essentiel, aller de l'avant, elle l'a fait, comme nous venons de le parcourir, de façon non linéaire et, pourrait-on écrire à la suite des cycles de Vico, comme une sorte de progression en colimaçon, plus précisément en cycles. Si tel est le cas, les

questions qui peuvent se poser à nous seraient de deux ordres que l'on pourrait énumérer ainsi :

1. Nous avons cru déceler une période de reflux ou au moins de tassement des luttes émancipatrices liées au cycle, disons inauguré par Bandung et les premières indépendances dans le continent. Le summum de la combativité aurait été atteint entre les mobilisations des années 1970 et l'effondrement du régime d'apartheid au début des années 1990 en Afrique du Sud. La dimension économique et la chute du cours mondial des matières premières, c'est-à-dire la réactivation du pacte colonial dans les années 1980, auront certainement joué un rôle important dans ce phénomène de repli, lié à un nouveau rapport des forces plutôt favorable au système international érigé par les dominants depuis les débuts de l'ère coloniale. Pour en venir au fait de cette première question, sommes-nous, au début des années 2020, au début d'un nouveau processus particulièrement favorable aux mobilisations émancipatrices en Afrique ? La confrontation en Europe, qui a vu le jour avec le conflit armé ayant choisi comme terrain d'expression le sol ukrainien, le dynamisme qui semble insufflé par l'émergence des Brics, la combativité des pays exportateurs d'hydrocarbures, et l'ébullition contestatrice qui pointe en Afrique et ailleurs dans le tiers-monde (ou « Sud global » ?), en seraient parmi les principaux indicateurs ;
2. Le deuxième ordre de questionnement porterait, quant à lui, plus particulièrement sur ce qui, dans ce contexte, serait attendu du Codesria et de ses partenaires, d'autant



plus que cette 16<sup>e</sup> Assemblée et ce cinquantième anniversaire coïncideraient avec les nouveaux changements qui s'annoncent, aussi bien en Afrique qu'à l'échelle du monde où nous vivons. Il s'agirait, pour aller droit au but, de mobiliser largement notre potentiel d'investigation scientifique dans l'accompagnement du processus qui semble émerger. Il ne s'agira pas ici de détailler pour cela des objectifs, ce qui ne pourra se faire que dans le cadre des débats de la communauté scientifique concernée par les activités du Codesria et l'avenir de notre continent. Il faudra cependant revenir sur des thématiques, même parfois galvaudées, en apparence du moins, mais sur lesquelles il faudra projeter des regards novateurs et pertinents. Le problème serait moins de trancher entre des approches privilégiant le «nativisme» et le regard «par en bas», ou l'universalisme censé être celui du savoir scientifique, car les deux optiques peuvent être marquées à la fois de travers et de fécondité. S'il est vrai que le savoir accumulé jusqu'ici en Occident peut être entaché de tares liées à l'origine coloniale et occidentalocentriste, il s'est déployé aussi dans un contexte dialectique et contradictoire, nous offrant beaucoup de ressources pour éclaircir notre passé et notre présent. S'il est aussi vrai que seule une société donnée peut mettre en œuvre à travers ses élites tout le potentiel nécessaire pour s'auto-connaître et opérer des choix décisifs pour l'accès à l'avenir,

le renfermement parfois induit sur soi-même peut, comme cela s'est parfois avéré dans le passé, être porteur de dérapages idéologiques désastreux et mener à de graves déboires si ce n'est à des impasses pour le devenir historique.

En tous les cas, il s'agira assurément de revisiter pour aujourd'hui les notions d'impérialisme et de domination, de colonial, de post-colonial et de décolonial, d'unipolarité, de néocolonial, et de multipolarité, de mondialisation et de globalisation de nations, de société civile, de société politique, de classes sociales, d'États et d'institutions nationales, pour nous cantonner à ces items.

Qu'est-ce qu'on pourrait ajouter en guise de conclusion à cet exposé relativement succinct, et sans se répéter, sinon que ce ne sont là que des propositions qui mériteraient d'être confrontées à celles de tous nos collègues? L'essentiel étant d'apporter notre contribution, en tant que scientifiques, pour aider l'Afrique à progresser dans le contexte planétaire nouveau qui semble poindre à l'horizon!

## Notes

1. Cette chronologie se trouve dans l'ouvrage de M'Bokolo, E., *Afrique noire, Histoire et civilisations*, tome II, p. 299 et p. 409, et est reprise dans M. Ferro (dir.), 2003, *Le Livre noir du colonialisme*, Paris, Robert Laffont, p. 623-624.
2. Savéliév et Vassiliév, p. 61 et suivantes. On pourra se référer aussi au travail plus fouillé concernant les anciennes colonies françaises, de Suret-Canale, Jean, *Afrique noire*, trois volumes (1961, 1971 et 1972), Paris, Éditions sociales.

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# CODESRIA'S Broader Experience with Gender: Towards a Feminist Epistemic Breakthrough with Persistent Structural Limitations

## Introduction

CODESRIA was created in response to the endemic social stagnation and a certain degree of confusion regarding the path forward that resulted from the weight of neocolonialism in Africa. Although African countries had acquired, or were resolutely engaged in the struggle for, independence, the prospects of this milestone were not immediately or even subsequently evident on numerous fronts. The perpetual domination and exploitation of the continent were woven into the mechanisms of the global capitalist system to the extent that Africa lagged behind other continents in many areas of development and social progress. On the intellectual front, the creation of CODESRIA was supposed to provide a revolutionary space where the structural issues that impeded social progress could be dismantled.

The preamble of CODESRIA's charter stipulates that it was established to provide an institutional space to help address issues faced by African countries that had been newly liberated or were still engaged in the struggle to acquire at least nominal independence. It was a space where work could be done to promote social science research on the African continent to produce 'proper information and knowledge' about the problems plaguing the continent so that 'the

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African people' might apply their agency in steering 'the processes of sustainable development'.

Article 24 states that 'The Executive Secretary shall ensure *gender* [emphasis is author's], generational, sub-regional, linguistic and disciplinary balance in the activities of CODESRIA'. The Charter refers to African and non-African 'scholars' in social sciences, in consistently gender-neutral language. In this reflective essay, I address some of CODESRIA's achievements with regard to gender while examining what I consider to be congenital limitations.

This essay is organised into three main parts. The first discusses key gender-focused programmes, activities and achievements of CODESRIA since its founding. The second addresses the fundamental and inevitable flaws and shortcomings of CODESRIA. The third section considers gender-focused reflections on possible paths for structural regeneration for more relevance and responsiveness.

## Key Gender-focused Programmes, Activities and Achievements of CODESRIA since its Inception

To situate my analysis of gender matters in CODESRIA, it is useful to clarify that I returned to Africa from the United States in the early 1980s as a young scholar with very strong interests in gender issues<sup>1</sup>, and joined the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) or Association des Femmes Africaines pour la Recherche et le Développement, (AFARD), which was housed on CODESRIA's premises in Dakar. I also became interested in and joined CODESRIA, with encouragement from my spouse, who was then a young professor at the University of Liberia. He shared his exciting meeting in Monrovia with Professor Cadman Atta-Mills, an outstanding Ghanaian economist with major contributions to policy issues across Africa. His enthusiasm in retelling that chance encounter was inspiring to me.

As a group of committed AAWORD/AFARD scholars, most of whom were also involved in CODESRIA, we aired pressing articulations of CODESRIA's inadequate treatment of the gender factor in epistemological matters and scholarly output. As a result, a major workshop on 'Gender Analysis and African Social Science', sponsored by CODESRIA, was

held in Dakar in September 1991. I was invited, and presented a paper titled 'Éducation de la Population Féminine et Pouvoir des Femmes en Afrique: Comment Rompre le Cercle Vicieux?' The revised papers of the workshop were published in the book co-edited by Ayesha Imam, Amina Mama and Fatou Sow, *Engendering African Social Sciences* (Imam, Mama and Sow 1997). My paper was included in this book, with the title 'Educating Africa's Girls and Women: A Conceptual and Historical Analysis of Gender Inequality'. The French edition of the book was co-published in 2004 by Karthala in Paris and CODESRIA in Dakar.

The second result was that CODESRIA established a Gender Institute; it ran on an annual basis for twenty-eight years, with one exception. In June 2023, one of CODESRIA's 'Reflections Meetings' was held in Kampala with a specific focus on 'CODESRIA's Experience with Gender Research: Towards a Feminist Epistemic Breakthrough'. My presentation in the panel on 'Gender Research & Programming at CODESRIA: Taking Stock of a 28-year History' was titled 'Gender Research at CODESRIA: The Scientific Committee Experiences'.

My reflections were informed in great part by my broader experiences as a member of CODESRIA and my work as coordinator of the Multinational Working Group (MWG) on Higher Education and the Regeneration of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Systems in Africa. During this time I was active in higher education research in several ways. For MWG, CODESRIA held two workshops in Dakar, in June 2005 and December 2006. I published an article in the *Journal of Higher Education in*

*Africa* (2005), wrote the Green Book *Higher Education in Africa: Crises, Reforms and Transformation*, published by CODESRIA in 2006, and did the empirical studies that led to the book manuscript co-edited with Zandile Mbuya, submitted to CODESRIA with the title *African Higher Education in Transition: Recurrent Impediments, Emerging Challenges and New Potentialities* (forthcoming). I also served as a member of CODESRIA'S Scientific Committee from 2009 to 2015.

Without systematically reviewing CODESRIA's gender-focused activities, it is worth acknowledging its achievements and promises in this regard. Although it was through the struggle and push of women in CODESRIA that the 1991 workshop on gender and African social sciences took place, which led to the aforementioned seminal book in English and French, the workshop played a major role in producing and disseminating knowledge informed by gender and feminist epistemology and methodology. This knowledge was made available to the academic community in Africa, the African diaspora and globally.

CODESRIA's mission included supporting other African organisations in need, especially with the same goal of contributing to the collective efforts to promote social progress on the continent. In this context, CODESRIA's provision of office space for AAWORD was fitting. However, although practically this arrangement was a welcome relief for AAWORD, in the patriarchal construct of male supremacy and female marginality, given the male dominance in CODESRIA and limited importance accorded to gender issues, the meaning of this office space arrangement created an

ambiguous atmosphere regarding the gendered and hierarchical conception of the organisation of the social space.

In the next section, this reflection focuses on possible explanations for why CODESRIA did not firmly and unequivocally adopt a gender-aware and -committed institutional space.

### **Fundamental Limitations of CODESRIA on Gender Matters**

As it was conceptualised, designed and executed, CODESRIA was created as a liberal institutional space for progressive, organic intellectuals engaged in the production of knowledge and other social pursuits towards the liberation of the African continent and its social system, and to promote sustainable social progress. However, given the primacy of the Marxist guiding framework, the actual power of factors of social differentiation and reproduction were not taken seriously. The notion of intersectionality, in terms of how social class might interact with other factors (e.g. gender, race) to produce, maintain and reproduce inequality and inadequate social transformations, was not considered at all. Indeed, the Marxist perspectives of the capitalist structure in class terms, though valid, constituted the sole focus with the assumption, and flaw, that if and when social classes were dismantled there would be equality for all including women, practically ignoring the specificities of gender-focused oppression even in its intersection with class.

There are four types of intellectuals. There are the producers of knowledge from the ivory tower. Then there are 'organic intellectuals', who could be considered to be self-appointed vanguards with a social mission in



terms of producing knowledge for the greater good in their systematic commitment to the cause of the entire society. Another is 'career-oriented intellectuals', whose guiding ethos is individualism and at times the selfish pursuit of their career geared to their personal gain. They may still hold strong family values of solidarity and may use some of their gain to fulfil family obligations. The fourth group of intellectuals includes those who may not consistently participate in intellectual production, and do so mainly for their economic survival and the maintenance of a certain standard of living that elevates them above the masses. Either by necessity or by the absence of consciousness of the role that intellectual production plays in society, they tend not to take an active part in intellectual production and direction.

In this essay, my main argument is not that women necessarily wanted to join CODESRIA in various capacities, including management/ leadership and research, and participate as any of the four categories of intellectuals. However, given the varying dispositions of people with higher education qualifications, if CODESRIA had made the efforts to create a more gender-inclusive space, it is plausible that more women would have joined. However, history informs us that such efforts were not consistently made.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to indicate that, at the time of the creation of CODESRIA in 1973, generally across the African continent, there was an endemic gender imbalance. The female population was underrepresented at all levels of the education system, with the imbalance growing from the lower to the higher education levels. Not long after CODESRIA

was established, a small group of African women met in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1976 to debate creating an institutional space where African women could exercise their agency to guide the production of knowledge on Africa. Subsequently, a year later AAWORD/AFARD was formally established as a feminist organisation dedicated to promoting positive social change in the conditions of women for their own rights and as central agents in African societies. AAWORD/AFARD 'brought together female African intellectuals to promote equal rights between men and women at the continental level and contributed greatly to the advancement of the status of African women'.<sup>3</sup>

The gender imbalance in African education had consequences especially in preparation for research at higher education levels. The historical causes include the decision by most African families not to send their girl-children to colonial schools, be they missionary schools in British and Belgian colonies or state schools in French colonies. Regardless of the colonial policies, at independence, all African countries inherited the European patriarchal values that relegated women to an inferior social status for which learning was deemed marginal. A process of negative homogenisation followed, whereby the African values that had empowered women were destroyed while those that were actually or potentially less favourable towards women were reinforced by the European version of supreme patriarchal domination. The combination of these two phenomena led to the entrenched gender imbalance in African educational systems and women's unequal participation in the production of knowledge.

Even though there are some southern African exceptions of women's participation in education at higher levels, the fundamental culture of women's marginalisation in social processes prevails. Thus, as an institutional space designed to critique the neocolonial social space, CODESRIA did not apply policies and practices to treat gender equality or attempt to close the gender gap in all dimensions of the institution, from the programmes to the leadership. This was most notable in the position of Executive Secretary, although the presidency has been occupied by a few women and there have been some women in the executive and scientific committees.

Another fundamental factor that has contributed to ignoring or postponing serious consideration of the gender matter is the underlying core ideology of Marxism, with its ensuing epistemological and methodological predilections and institutional policies and practices. The unconditional and blind application of Marxist ideology and subsequent methodology and academic and administrative policies resulted in unintended and perverse effects. In a work, ironically dedicated to the founder of CODESRIA, I wrote that the ideology was a major limitation, because 'the classical Marxist analysis did not recognise the primordial and recurring role of the control of the mind and the ability to neutralise the critical mind through the instrument of education imposed by and/or inherited from colonization' (Assié-Lumumba 2023: 28–29).

Indeed, orthodox Marxist analysis stipulates that social class is the key defining factor of social differentiation and structural inequality. The unfortunate convergence of, on the one hand,

the inherited primitive European patriarchal system transferred to and entrenched in African culture, and on the other hand the Marxist approach, with primacy of social class as the key or nearly the sole determinant of inequality, produced some of the major limitations in CODESRIA's gender policies and undertakings. This resulted in what could be termed a de facto debilitating 'boys' club', with fervent male gatekeepers who did not hesitate to exclude even some males whom they perceived not to be solidly committed to the continuation of territoriality, to protect the boundaries with a certain degree of 'copinage' with the backing of some critical external supporters, even if they were staunch advocates of gender equality in other spaces. In this context, the efforts of genuinely gender-sensitive male members could not advance successfully for change. In this context, the dominant male culture was also protected by some of the few females who were let in by the powerful gatekeepers.

### **An Epistemic Shift Towards a Gender-focused Structural Regeneration**

In this first quarter of the twenty-first century—that is, more than six decades after African countries started to acquire their nominal political independence—the number of female students and graduates in higher education remains insignificant. Indeed, despite early postcolonial commitments and policies adopted to increase overall enrolments and redress inequalities, African states did not sustain the pace for closing the gender gap, especially at the higher education levels where the imbalance is the greatest. Unequal gender distribution is a major characteristic of most institutions. For instance, women are overwhelmingly underrepresented

in scientific fields and sub-fields. And disciplinary gender clusters are reproduced in the labour market and on the occupational ladder. Such contexts do not give women the space to reach their maximal potential and realise their capabilities. The issue is not the existence of clusters per se. These become a problem only because they contain embedded social values and, consequently, processes of simultaneous feminisation and devaluation of fields, sub-fields and occupations. Involuntary and negative gender clusters, especially in systems that are built on a co-educational philosophy, constitute an indicator of marginalisation.

The unfortunate, unequal, gendered and disciplinary clusters lead to limited representation of women in critical positions in the domains of politics, the economy, education and knowledge production. In the current context of globalisation, the information age and knowledge economy, the lack of or limited access to education constitutes an absolute hindrance. Decision-making processes and planning miss the concerns, viewpoints and inputs of women; this constitutes an infringement on their rights to exercise their capabilities and a loss for Africa if it cannot benefit from their insight.

In addition to the low number of women at every level of the formal education system, especially higher education, there is a broader philosophical and political question concerning the nature of education itself and the type of development to which those who acquire it are expected to contribute. In the rush to expand education at the beginning of nominal independence, many leaders failed to address fundamental questions concerning the kind of education and kind of development needed.

CODESRIA helped to fill a void in the neocolonial context of the 1970s. But it limited its potential by not taking seriously the gender aspect for social transformation. It would have been helpful if a vigorous debate had been held at the founding of the Council. At the time, there were relatively few African women in the scholarly landscape, as a result of interactions between Africans' position and European policies regarding the significance and implication of European education for African girls and women. However, it was necessary to include women to emulate the African 'gendered and equal' philosophy that African scholars had produced even before the founding of CODESRIA (Diop 1959, 1996; Steady 1981; Amadiume 1987; Assié-Lumumba 1996, 2000, 2007; Mama et al. 1997; Oyewumi, 1997, 2011).

It is of key importance to break the psychological and physical barriers between schooling in general, especially higher education, and the female population, in part to prepare for building capacity to contribute to relevant and transformative knowledge production by women, and to inform society as a whole and policy-makers of the importance of women's contribution to knowledge production for their rights and the interest of the broader society. The underlying philosophy must be inclusive and democratic and show commitment to gender equality, which means that women and men have to be equally valued and involved with knowledge and advocacy through CODESRIA.

### **Concluding Reflections**

Despite CODESRIA's impressive output of publications (books and journals) and other activities, including the Gender Institute

and Governance Institute, the persistently dominant culture of the interface of the 'boys' club' and 'copinage' with a complex system of institutional gatekeepers has not allowed CODESRIA to develop its promise. It has allowed, and even conveniently co-opted, some women as male surrogates despite the continued discourse of gender equality. Hence, the few truly progressive male voices wanting to promote structural change have been drowned in the Council despite their genuine efforts.

Colonial policies led to African countries inheriting the European patriarchal values of the time, which dictated for women an inferior social status and marginal learning and social space in the colonies as in Europe itself. A process of negative homogenisation, whereby African values that had empowered women were ignored or destroyed while those that were actually or potentially less favourable found new fertile ground, led to a foundation for gender inequality. The combination of these two phenomena led to the entrenched gender imbalance in the educational system, which, ironically, the educational process contributes to reproduce.

Despite early postcolonial commitment and policies adopted to increase overall education enrolment and redress inequality, African states did not sustain the pace for closing the gender gap, especially at the higher education levels. Unequal gender distribution of education in quantity and type is a major characteristic of most institutions. Such contexts do not allow the space for women to achieve their potential and to realise their capabilities. This is where CODESRIA could have made a clear difference through its policies and practices. The benevolent Marxist institutional framework regarding

gender and the ensuing policies and practices hid damaging gender-insensitive approaches that needed transformation towards the initially stated goal for social progress.

In my own reflections as both a woman and an educator, I am aware that there were, and still are, a lot of missed opportunities in equipping females and harnessing their potential for the full potential of the continent. CODESRIA as an organisation had, and still has, the opportunity to fully employ the potential of its female collaborators and thus raise the bar in the language of gender inclusivity. Although through history there is evidence of the failure by most newly independent African states to create and sustain the momentum to close gaps caused by gender discrimination, there is still hope and a need to do so. A good starting point would be to go beyond the mere rhetoric of equal education opportunities and actually ensure that the right conditions are put in place for the equal participation of men and women across the many relevant arenas pertaining to the development of the continent.

Policies and practices can be the springboards to catapult change. There are glaring holes in the benevolent Marxist institutional framework regarding gender and the ensuing policies and practices that are evidently detrimental to the inclusion and equal participation of all productive and capable members of societies. I am, however, sure that, and will conclude by saying: despite the negative consequences of decades of structural gender-based inequalities and deferment of equal opportunities for all the capabilities: IT IS NOT TOO LATE AND IT IS A SINE QUANON FOR AFRICA'S ADVANCEMENT!

## Notes

1. One of my two master's degrees from Université Lyon (now Université Lumière) in France was on understanding gender-based social organisations and women's space and roles. It was titled 'La Femme Ivoirienne dans la Vie Politique: La Femme Baoulé N'Gbongbo de l'Exode à la Pacification (1730–1915)', Mémoire de Maîtrise, Université Lyon II, Lyon, France (1974). A revised and enhanced version was published later as *Les Africaines dans la Politique: Femmes Baoulé de Côte d'Ivoire*, Paris: L'Harmattan (1996).
2. From the early days of education in Europe, when churches shaped institutions of higher learning, to after states succeeded in their struggle for secularisation, in accordance with some church dogmas women were excluded from the intellectual forum, production of knowledge and policy-making. Although by the time African countries started to acquire their independence, European institutions had undergone transformations, African universities, even those that were created after independence, de facto emulated some of these European sociohistorical ivory tower characteristics.
3. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Association\\_of\\_African\\_Women\\_for\\_Research\\_and\\_Development#cite\\_note-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Association_of_African_Women_for_Research_and_Development#cite_note-2)

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## Empowering Women through Increased Access to Productive Resources: A Key to Gender Equality—Reflections from a Gender Institute Alumna

### Introduction

Women’s equal access to and control over productive resources is critical for the achievement of gender equality, empowerment of women and for equitable and sustainable economic growth and development. Gender equality is when women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human rights and for contributing to and benefiting from economic, social, cultural and political development. It is the equal valuing by society of the similarities and differences between men and women, boys and girls and the roles they play (World Bank 2012). Gender equality in

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the distribution of economic and productive resources has positive multiplier effects for a range of key development goals, including poverty reduction and the welfare of children.

The World Bank defines gender equality in terms of ‘rights, resources and voices’ – equality under the law, equality of opportunities (including access to human capital and other

productive resources) and equality of rewards for work and equality of voice (Mason and King 2001). However, equal opportunities in various domains of life lag. For instance, women’s representation in positions of power and decision-making remains below parity. Only 47 per cent of the data required to track progress on SDG 5 is currently available, rendering women and girls effectively invisible. Extreme poverty is projected to deepen for women and girls globally. Statistics show that by the end of 2022 around 383 million women and girls lived in extreme poverty compared to 368 million men and boys (UN DESA 2022). More than eight in ten are in sub-Saharan Africa (62.8 per cent), with 21.4 per cent in

Central Asia and Southern Asia. If current trends continue, by 2030, more women and girls will live in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa than today (UN DESA 2022). Without deliberate efforts to provide for women's economic empowerment and improve their access to productive resources, gender equality will continue to be illusory.

Development rationales for enhancing women's access to productive resources and, ultimately, women's economic empowerment include women's role as the informal safety net and carers during economic downturns and crises (World Bank 2009; Mushunje 2014). These include crises such as conflict and disease – the most recent being the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 amplified the role that women play as caregivers to the sick in which they subsidise the state's function as the primary provider of social protection. Women and men experience and cope with risk, insecurity and crises differently, with women often risking their safety in untenable, exploitative and abusive relationships for fear of loss of support (UN Women 2021).

The neoliberal restructuring of social policy has inadvertently transferred previous state responsibilities of social reproduction to women, thereby increasing women's unpaid work. The emerging role of women as household head and breadwinner, and the intensification of discriminatory practices based on gender in the labour market, further amplify the clarion call for women's economic empowerment.

The legacy of colonial urban laws and practices in Africa is such that urban women's employment options are limited and offer the poorest of

working conditions: they work long hours, with poor pay and stability, long periods of separation from their families (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida 2012) and often without social security. Women consequently dominate the informal sector, where they are mostly concentrated in precarious and time-consuming trades, though some are moving to non-traditional informal economies, such as manufacturing, mining and trading building materials.

A United Nations report postulates that it will take close to 300 years to achieve gender equality if the current rate of progress continues (UN DESA 2022). The report highlights the importance of investing in women to reclaim and accelerate progress. One of the key critical investments is in increasing women's access to productive resources, as defined by the World Bank (2018), which will result in women's economic empowerment and a step towards gender equality. Growing evidence suggests that if women are economically empowered and invested in, the gains accrue to the entire household because women tend to be concerned about translating benefits to their entire households (World Bank 2012; Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO] 2011). Unfortunately, women's economic empowerment is often entangled with social norms that frown upon women's ownership of resources such as land.

The international community has made strong, comprehensive commitments to gender equality and women's rights in access to and control over economic and financial resources. Human rights treaties, mechanisms and instruments have also addressed the issues of women's access to and control over resources. Governments have

the primary responsibility for implementing these commitments. On the African continent, the most prominent is the Maputo Protocol, the twentieth anniversary of which was commemorated in 2023. Globally, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) mandates the recognition of women's rights across different areas, ranging from health and education to political participation, among many other important rights. Sustainable Development Goal 5 also addresses gender equality. Unfortunately, the actual realisation of women's rights and gender equality remains a remote reality, which impedes the achievement of women's economic empowerment and access to finance. Addressing gender inequality and securing women's economic empowerment is a basic human rights issue. Under neoliberal globalisation, women's poverty and the deepening of women's oppression and exploitation has been exacerbated (Sewpaul 2013) and their economic empowerment is a moral imperative.

### **Women's Economic Empowerment**

Kabeer (2012) defined empowerment as the 'expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in contexts where this ability has been denied them' (Kabeer 2012: 4). The Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) framework drawn up by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) defines WEE in terms of four components to which women need access:

- 1) full employment and decent work;

- 2) financial resources;
- 3) social protection; and 4) land, housing and other productive resources (UN Development Fund for Women [UNIFEM] 2010).

Economic empowerment seeks to ensure that people have the appropriate skills, capabilities and resources, and access to secure and sustainable incomes and livelihoods. Related to this, some organisations focus heavily on the importance of access to assets and resources (Luttrell et al. 2009). Empowerment is when women have access to the means of production, and it relates to increased agency and the ability to exercise this agency. Sewpaul, Osthus and Mhone (2014) have argued that ‘empowerment through consciousness-raising contributes to liberation, heightened feelings of self-esteem, efficacy and control and supports the view that people have the capacity to reflect and to act’ (Sewpaul et al. 2014: 56). Although there are many different theories of change for women’s economic empowerment, most of them revolve around broad elements, such as access to income and assets, control of and benefit from economic gains, and the power to make decisions.

Longwe identified five levels at which women are empowered (March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay 1999). These levels consist of the following:

1. *Control* – this is the highest form of empowerment. It refers to a balance between women and men and ensures that neither dominates nor enjoys an advantage over the other. Kabeer (2001) noted that this is usually operationalised in terms of having a say in relation to the resources in question.

2. *Participation* – this refers to equal participation in decision-making at all levels by women and men.
3. *Conscientisation* – this is having awareness of and understanding the social basis of gender roles and the sexual division of labour, and recognising the fact that these are cultural and can be changed.
4. *Access* – this comprises ensuring that women have equal access to the means of production, such as land, labour, credit, education, training, marketing and all public services and benefits.
5. *Welfare* – this is the basic level of empowerment that seeks to meet women’s material basic needs relative to those of men. It is concerned with women’s access to health, food, income and shelter.

The following discussion focuses on the productive resources, namely assets, income, decision-making and control, as being key for women’s economic empowerment.

### **Access to Finance and Assets**

Assets give individuals the capability to be and to act (Bebbington and Perrault 1999). They increase women’s agency. They also give meaning to people’s lives. Assets can be used as collateral for the purchase of productive resources, such as agricultural inputs and implements, especially in the context of Africa where most women are subsistence farmers. Within a household there are assets that are held by women or men, or jointly, and how these are distributed also determines and influences household decision-making. With access to productive resources and assets such as land, women can apply for loans to start

or grow their businesses because they can use the land as collateral.

Access to finance through grants is also a pathway towards women’s economic empowerment. There is persuasive evidence which shows that access to cash social transfers and grants can immediately improve income and reduce overall inequality, including gender inequality, and contribute to household food security. In all African countries where social pensions have been introduced (for example, South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland), a consistent finding is that some pension income is spent on purchasing inputs (fertiliser, seeds) and hiring agricultural labour (Devereux 2009). This is particularly important in Africa, where the bulk of women are in the agricultural sector. Thus, even small grants can have an impact on gender inequality and increase women’s economic empowerment and choices of how to spend money, which in most instances is for the benefit of the household.

Investing in women therefore has gains and can contribute to overall economic development. Yet, assets are still generally unequally distributed between women and men in households (Quisumbing 2009). It will take a change in the stereotypes that confine women to certain spaces, such as reproductive and related unpaid care work, to balance the distribution. Social norms exert a powerful influence over the roles women are expected to play in society.

Even though most people working in agriculture are women, their access to and ownership of productive resources and assets remains low (Quisumbing 2003). The FAO (2011) also notes that in order for women to be productive at



the same levels as men they need to be supported to access productive resources, including financing and technology. This would lead to an increase of 20–30 per cent more food and contribute more significantly to the GDP. Access to finance is key for successful rural development strategies. Without adequate access to loans, women may not be able to engage in businesses or exercise self-agency, and economic empowerment may continue to be out of reach.

Rural finance programmes are largely crafted for men as the heads of households, ignoring the fact that women are active and productive (Fletschner, Anderson and Cullen 2010). Formal credit institutions normally insist on security or collateral to provide credit. This is especially in the form of land or property. However, in Africa very few women own land. As a result, women are excluded from credit due to lack of collateral. Bank procedures are also very cumbersome. There is rampant discrimination in banks against female borrowers, and before they can negotiate they may be asked to have the husband co-sign any agreement. Lending institutions are also biased against women. Women tend to have limited control over resources that are accepted as collateral, as studies in Malawi, Bangladesh and Paraguay have shown (Fletschner et al. 2010).

Banks sometimes refuse to give loans to women on the grounds that women's requests are small and therefore costly in administrative costs. According to bankers, they are therefore unprofitable. Such attitudes have given rise to the growth of micro finance institutions (MFIs). This industry is growing rapidly because of the promise of reaching the poor and marginalised and ultimately

improving their lives. Women have generally found alternative means of raising finance, such as income savings and lending schemes. Gugerty (2007) hypothesised that one of the reasons women were active in rotating credit and savings associations (ROSCAs) was that this was a socially accepted strategy to save. ROSCAs allowed women to protect their savings from their husband and create credit and finance for themselves.

It is worth noting that, whether because of innate psychological characteristics or attitudes influenced by social conditions, men and women tend to exhibit systematic differences in their behaviour with regards to loans. Men take risks and borrow bigger sums of money, yet their repayment rates are lower, whereas women borrow smaller sums of money but their repayment rates are higher (Fletschner et al. 2010). How money is spent in a household is dependent on the bargaining power that women have. Women's access to credit improves self-agency (International Finance Corporation [IFC] 2017).

Women's access to financial resources can be improved by building their capacity to transact through digital platforms. The digital economy is becoming a bigger part of all our lives. To take advantage of economic opportunities in the digital economy, women need to be able to make and receive payments. The financial inclusion community tends to focus on the gender gap for accounts, but there is also a significant gap around phone ownership. Laws and social norms deeply affect women's ability to use financial services to improve their lives. A lack of property rights prevents women from obtaining loans in many markets. And a lack

of ID makes it difficult for women to access accounts. According to the World Bank, women still face legal barriers to obtaining an identity document, a basic requirement for opening an account.

Many female entrepreneurs do not apply for loans because of low financial literacy, risk aversion or fear of failure (IFC 2017). Digital financial services can help bridge the gender gap in account ownership and access to credit by decreasing the cost of access to financial services and bypassing constraints imposed by social norms and limited mobility. Digital financial services can also contribute to women's empowerment and autonomy by increasing their control over their financial resources.

### **Control and Benefit from Income Gains**

Long-standing inequalities in the gender distribution of economic and financial resources have placed women at a disadvantage relative to men in their capability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from broader processes of development. Economic empowerment provides a pathway for addressing women's structural poverty. The main economic activity for women in rural areas is still subsistence agriculture, but they are restricted to tasks that do not derive added value (reserved for men) so they have little control over income. Most women also have limited access to land and no decision-making power on land use (Mushunje 2002, 2017; UN 2009). With the rise in unemployment and consequent male migration away from rural areas, women-headed households are becoming increasingly common but they still face limited decision-making over productive resources.

## The Importance of Women's Economic Empowerment

Women are generally adversely affected by strong, negative, cultural and religious beliefs that perpetuate inequalities in terms of access, control and ownership of resources in all sectors of the economy (Ministry of Economic Planning & Investment Promotion [MEPIP] 2011). Their poverty and economic reliance on men subject rural and urban women to abuse and, in some circumstances, GBV, transactional sex and HIV and AIDS. Early marriage of girls to much older men, largely practised in poor households, undermines girls' economic empowerment, access to services and ability to prevent GBV and abuse (Sida 2012; Quisumbing 2003).

## Challenges in Securing Women's Economic Empowerment

Gaps in legislation and policies also hinder women's full participation in economic activities (Beremauro, Madzivire and Chitsike 2021), and as a result the realisation of their economic empowerment is compromised. *Strong cultural and religious beliefs perpetuate inequalities in terms of access, control and ownership of resources in all sectors of the economy, undermining women's economic empowerment. Opportunities for formal employment for women are few, so most engage in agriculture and the informal sector and, in particular, cross-border trade – all unregulated and discriminatory income-generating environments. Women's lack of access to resources, their economic dependence on men, and their care roles coupled with the applicability of customary law to land and domestic issues,*

*conspire to keep women in situations that undermine their empowerment. For instance, in Zimbabwe women still lag behind men in terms of access to formal financial institution accounts (37.12 per cent versus 42.55 per cent men) as per the World Bank's 2012 Global Financial Inclusion (Global Findex) database.*

## Conclusion

Neoliberal globalisation has increased the burden for women. The traditional roles that women undertook in the pre-modern phase have continued, but in addition women have taken on more duties, which has been necessitated by the changes in lifestyles as a result of migration, the effects of HIV and AIDS, global economic integration and economic hardships, among other factors. Access to financial resources, assets and decision-making power is essential to allow women to benefit fully from economic opportunities. Legal, institutional and sociocultural barriers often, however, limit women's access to these services. Economic growth strategies should therefore include women's economic empowerment, with a focus on creating a gender-sensitive macroeconomic environment, full employment and decent work, access to land, property and other productive resources as well as financial services, and full coverage of social protection measures. Closing the gender gap is a key component that contributes to women's empowerment. Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are requisites for holistic development. A woman who is empowered can make effective household decisions and her household is better off socially and economically. This can also

influence the type of assets she acquires. Access to and control over assets is a key determinant of individual empowerment.

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## Le CODESRIA : une philosophie, une école, une bibliothèque sur l'Afrique

J'ai travaillé au Codesria de mai 2005 à janvier 2009 en qualité de Secrétaire exécutif adjoint, Ebrima Sall étant le Secrétaire exécutif. Ces années ont été pour moi celles de la découverte d'une institution jouissant d'une grande réputation internationale. Je connaissais certes le Codesria, mais c'est en participant à sa gestion que j'ai personnellement mieux jaugé et compris la grandeur de cette institution. Le défi pour moi était donc de tout mettre en œuvre pour que j'apporte ma contribution afin que cette réputation grandisse pendant notre mandat, ou à tout le moins qu'elle ne puisse pas connaître une baisse dont nous assumerions la responsabilité.

Ces années-là ont aussi été celles de profonds enrichissements sur l'agenda intellectuel du Codesria, notamment en ce qui concerne les problèmes de l'université africaine en général et ceux dont souffre la recherche en Afrique en particulier. Des années d'un approfondissement théorique et épistémologique sur les problématiques du développement de l'Afrique, et sur la responsabilité de l'intellectuel africain face à l'impasse dans laquelle se trouve notre continent.

### Une école de gestion orthodoxe

Je suis arrivé au Codesria, en mai 2005, pétri d'une grande expérience de gestion adminis-

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trative et financière et de bonnes connaissances des problèmes que connaissent les universités africaines et les institutions de recherche, pour avoir dirigé, en qualité de recteur, et ce, pendant quatre ans (2005-2009), l'université de Kinshasa (Unikin), la plus grande université de la République démocratique du Congo (RDC). Et avant l'Unikin, j'avais été recteur de l'université Kongo (2002-2005). Mais aussi pour avoir été président de l'Union pour l'étude de la population africaine (UEPA) (1996-1999), dont le siège a été déménagé de Dakar à Accra. J'ai donc pris mes fonctions, déterminé à faire profiter au Codesria de ce que j'estimais être une expérience très riche.

Aussitôt après avoir pris mes fonctions, j'ai vite compris que le Codesria était une grande école de gestion administrative et financière rigoureuse. Je découvris, dès les premiers jours de mes fonctions, et progressivement, des méthodes de gestion qui permettent d'atteindre les objectifs fixés dans les Plans quinquennaux : une traçabilité sans faille des multiples activités

et programmes menés par l'institution, une planification annuelle des activités, des plans de trésorerie respectant les lignes budgétaires, la régularité dans la préparation et la soumission des rapports narratifs et financiers au Comité exécutif et aux partenaires pour leur approbation, une rigueur dans le recrutement et la gestion du personnel, et dans l'utilisation du matériel et de la logistique, etc.

J'ai compris, avec le temps, que cette orthodoxie administrative et financière aura permis au Codesria d'être crédible auprès de ses partenariats et de les fidéliser. Au point où certains parmi eux, notamment SIDA-SAREC, pour ne citer que celui-là, apportent leur appui financier au Codesria depuis sa création en 1973. Cela est plutôt rare en Afrique, où beaucoup d'institutions perdent très vite leur crédibilité auprès de leurs partenaires.

Il s'agit là d'un grand acquis que le Codesria doit préserver, d'autant plus que ce sont surtout les partenaires extérieurs qui lui apportent l'appui financier nécessaire. En effet, les États africains, et dans une moindre mesure les autres institutions africaines, n'apportent pas un appui financier substantiel et continu au Codesria, exception faite du Sénégal qui abrite son siège. Cette situation est regrettable. L'absence de financement de la recherche

en Afrique par les institutions africaines a des conséquences fâcheuses que l'on a tendance à négliger. Une de ces conséquences est l'orientation de la recherche africaine sur des thématiques qui intéressent plutôt les bailleurs de fonds et pas nécessairement les pays et les chercheurs africains. On peut citer, à titre d'exemple, les recherches sur les migrations.

Les recherches sur les migrations se focalisent depuis un certain temps sur les migrations internationales, pour les raisons que l'on sait. «L'afflux» des Africains vers les pays du Nord inquiète, dérange ces pays et les populations qui les accueillent. D'où la nécessité de mener des recherches pour appréhender correctement les causes profondes qui poussent les Africains à affluer dans ces pays et pour rechercher les mécanismes les plus efficaces pour les inciter à retourner chez eux. Et pourtant, les pays africains souffrent plus des migrations internes, notamment les migrations rurales-urbaines appelées aussi l'exode rural, à propos desquelles les bailleurs de fonds ne veulent plus financer la recherche. Ces migrants en provenance des milieux ruraux exacerbent les problèmes de gestion des villes africaines. Ils finissent par gonfler le secteur informel, car ils ne trouvent pas les emplois qu'ils viennent chercher dans les villes. Qui plus est, celles-ci sont en déficit d'infrastructures par rapport à la demande à satisfaire, obligeant ainsi les migrants, mais aussi les natifs, à se contenter, par exemple, de logements de fortune dans des quartiers pas toujours ou mal urbanisés, où il manque l'eau, l'électricité, les routes, de bonnes écoles et des centres de santé, etc.

Quiconque circule à travers les villes africaines se pose constamment la question de savoir ce que ces villes

deviendront dans les dix, vingt, cinquante ans. L'insécurité, les vols, la promiscuité, les difficultés de transport, les embouteillages sont autant de fléaux qui rendent de plus en plus les villes africaines invivables. Faut-il, dès lors, développer les villes secondaires qui devraient retenir les migrants qui s'orientent vers les grandes villes, notamment les villes-capitales? Une étude que nous avons menée en 1988 a malheureusement montré que les villes secondaires ne savent pas jouer ce rôle, parce qu'elles non plus n'offrent pas les opportunités, en matière d'emplois, de modernité, de mirage, que les migrants vont chercher dans les grandes villes. Ces villes secondaires ne servent que de villes de transit dans le cheminement qui conduit les migrants en provenance des milieux ruraux vers les grandes villes (Lututala 1989).

### **Une école pour mieux comprendre l'Afrique**

Mon expérience dans la gestion du Codesria m'aura aussi permis de consolider mes connaissances et considérations sur la problématique du développement de l'Afrique, y compris celle relative aux universités africaines. Le Codesria met en place et gère plusieurs programmes, il publie pas moins de onze revues scientifiques, il organise des rencontres scientifiques de très haut niveau à travers toute l'Afrique. Il est préoccupé par la nécessité, voire l'urgence de «repenser le développement en Afrique<sup>1</sup>». Et cela passe par la nécessité de renforcer le cadre institutionnel, c'est-à-dire les universités et centres de recherche, qui doivent repenser ce développement. Cela passe aussi par une vision afrocentrique de l'Afrique.

Oui, il faut repenser l'Afrique et déconstruire bon nombre de théories, qui sont véhiculées sur l'Afrique. Nous, universitaires africains, sommes confrontés à ce grand dilemme de chercher à mieux comprendre pourquoi notre continent, l'Afrique, croupit dans le sous-développement, et de proposer des politiques idoines pour la sortir de là. Ce, d'autant plus que d'aucuns vont jusqu'à nous considérer (les universitaires africains) comme étant les responsables de l'impossible développement de nos pays. Une anecdote à ce sujet. S'adressant aux professeurs de la Faculté des sciences économiques et de gestion de l'université de Kinshasa, qui avaient affirmé au cours d'un colloque que la crise de l'économie congolaise [zaïroise] trouvait ses fondements dans la mal gouvernance politique, le président Mobutu, paix à son âme, s'était moqué des professeurs en les qualifiant «d'économistes de chambre»!

À travers ses conférences, séminaires et publications, le Codesria mène des réflexions qui invitent à juger et à penser l'Afrique autrement. Mais aussi à enseigner l'Afrique autrement pour produire ces cadres capables de penser l'Afrique autrement, car c'est de là que vient le mal. Nous, intellectuels africains, avons été formatés à travers la formation que nous avons reçue dans les salles de classe et les auditoriums à penser l'Afrique dans sa posture de colonisée, de réservoir de matières premières, de périphérie du centre de décision du Nord, de dépendance économique et politique dépourvue d'une âme et même de droits humains. Nos écoles et universités doivent produire un nouveau type d'Africains.

## Quelques regrets

Lorsqu'on a œuvré quelques années dans la gouvernance du Codesria, et/ou qu'on participe à ses activités, qu'on lit et qu'on comprend le combat intellectuel de cette institution, on est surpris et déçu par deux choses. La première est de constater que les idées défendues par le Codesria, dont je viens de démontrer la pertinence, ne sont quasiment pas valorisées par les décideurs politiques africains dans le processus de prise de décision en Afrique. Pourquoi, alors que ces décideurs font venir à coups de centaines de milliers de dollars des experts de l'Occident, font-ils la sourde oreille aux réflexions et propositions qui sont émises par les chercheurs africains et africanistes du Codesria? Pourquoi, alors que le Codesria jouit d'une grande réputation internationale, reste-t-il méconnu dans le continent? À chacun et chacune sa réponse. Toujours est-il que le Codesria doit encore beaucoup travailler pour mieux faire connaître la nouvelle vision de l'Afrique aux Africains et à leurs décideurs politiques. Et cela doit passer nécessairement par la formation scolaire et universitaire. C'est en effet à ce niveau que nous devons forger un nouvel état d'esprit chez les jeunes africains qui deviendront demain les décideurs politiques. Mais là se trouve ma deuxième déception.

En effet, pourquoi, cinquante années après sa création et malgré son inestimable contribution, le Codesria n'est-il pas encore cette

Bibliothèque à laquelle devraient s'abreuver tous les enseignants, chercheurs et étudiants africains? Pourquoi continuons-nous à enseigner et à faire chanter à nos enfants que «nos ancêtres sont des Gaulois»? Ou à leur faire mémoriser toute l'histoire de la civilisation occidentale alors qu'ils ne connaissent que très peu de leur propre histoire, celle des Malinkés, du royaume Kongo, de Amilcar Cabral, de Simon Kimbangu, de Tombouctou, etc.? Depuis les indépendances, les leaders africains ont attiré notre attention sur le fait que l'histoire de l'Afrique doit être écrite par les Africains eux-mêmes, une histoire non falsifiée, une histoire qui dote les jeunes Africains des armes du combat. En fait, au-delà de l'histoire, c'est de toutes les connaissances scientifiques qu'il faut parler. Le Codesria a produit et continue à produire des connaissances multidisciplinaires qui devraient, mieux, qui doivent être enseignées dans nos écoles et nos universités. Il y a une nécessité de revoir nos curricula, mais surtout le contenu de nos enseignements. Pourquoi les universités africaines ne s'engagent-elles pas sur cette voie? J'ai côtoyé et je côtoie des collègues qui n'ont jamais entendu parler du Codesria et qui ne connaissent pas la «Bibliothèque Codesria», des collègues qui continuent à comprendre et à enseigner l'Afrique selon les vieilles théories occidentales. Cette méconnaissance est encore plus grande chez les élèves et étudiants.

## En guise de conclusion

Célébrer les cinquante années du Codesria, c'est d'abord rendre hommage à ses pères fondateurs, puis à son inestimable contribution à la recherche pour une meilleure compréhension de l'Afrique, notamment des enjeux de son développement. J'ai tenté, dans les présentes notes, de faire ressortir cette grandeur du Codesria, telle que je l'ai vécue à travers mes fonctions de Secrétaire exécutif adjoint du Codesria : sa gouvernance, sa vision de l'Afrique, son immense travail de repenser l'Afrique, et de reformater l'intellectuel africain. Le jour où tous les Africains et africanistes, y compris la classe politique et l'élite intellectuelle, intérioriseront et s'approprieront ce combat intellectuel du Codesria, l'Afrique aura trouvé la voie à suivre pour son développement.

## Note

1. Lire Codesria, 2008, *Plan Stratégique 2007-2011. Consolidation et renouveau de la recherche sociale en Afrique*, Dakar, Codesria, p. 6.

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# Bridging the Research-Praxis Divide in Feminist Methodologies: A WORDOC Model

## Introduction

**A**s a graduate of the Higher Education Leadership Institute, my scholarly and administrative engagements have received a boost, so I am grateful for the opportunity to attend my first CODESRIA Gender Institute meeting which coincides with the CODESRIA at 50 celebrations.

In 2017, when I assumed office as Coordinator of Women's Research and Documentation Center (WORDOC) at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, I took time to run through the files of the then 30-year-old Centre. I began seeking answers to the following questions which I believe are key to conversations on feminist methodology:

1. How has feminist research been conducted?
2. What are the methods that have been used/ or are being used?
3. Have the methods led to the desired epistemic rupture/ or what I describe as 'intellectual orgasm'?

The first thing I noticed was that my predecessors were writing practice into research and bringing research into praxis. The works of Bolanle Awe, La Ray Denzer, Nina Mba and Abiola Odejide, among others, opened a pathway for my feminist methodological sojourn. It is that journey that

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came to mind when I was asked to discuss feminist methodologies at the CODESRIA at 50 celebration which also marked the gathering of the 28<sup>th</sup> CODESRIA Gender Institute gathering.

The dearth of women's experiences in the academy and scholarship was a concern to researchers as far back as the 1970s. More worrisome was what Salo (2003: 5) described as the 'perpetual deafness' of the social sciences which allowed male-centric curriculum to pervade academic disciplines. This necessitated the need to 'write women' into scholarships and disciplines, so that courses focusing on women were created and introduced across academic departments. This initial step signalled feminist thinking as the underlying tool for identifying and ending all forms of discrimination against women. The efforts of organisations such as Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), African Gender Institute (AGI) and Network of Women's Studies in Nigeria (NWSN) attest to this. As they progressed in the venture, seeking to establish women's

studies centres in institutions across the continent, patriarchal structures altered their aspirations, forcing a shift to 'gender' as against 'feminist' scholarship. Perhaps androcentric methodological flaws which presented feminism in a questionable light also contributed to that shift which then gave preference to gender research in the academy. Although feminism was meant to serve a different objective – spotlighting women's oppression, and challenging norms and structures that perpetuate this oppression – the turn to 'gender' as an entry point became a survival strategy that allowed scholars to encounter and engage feminism mainly in the process of studying gender. Through it all, methodology issues have remained in the forefront of gender scholarship, that is, seeking to define inclusion and exclusion criteria, methods and designs that could be generally accepted in conducting gender-conscious research.

Methodology is broadly understood as an analysis of how research should be conducted. Harding (1987) notes how methodologies are often confused with epistemologies, theories of knowledge, and research methods, which are the actual tools used to carry out research. Furthermore, research methodology has revolved largely around the use of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods for approaching studies,

clarifying what type of data should be collected, from whom, and how it should be analysed. However, methodological discourses are not valuable on their own; they must also focus on the practicability, systematic nature and universal acceptability of pathways that justify what is claimed to be knowledge.

### **From Gender Methodologies to Feminist Methodologies**

Recent developments in gender studies, including its extension into sexualities, have both expanded and complicated the terrains of enquiry. The politics of difference and policies on gender across the continents have raised debate which affects society, as well as also scholarship, advocacy and activism. Pathways explored in the recent past include Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD), Gender Mainstreaming (GM), Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), and Gender Equality, Empowerment of Women and Social Inclusion (GEESI). These frameworks affirm that specific methods or combination of methods may be used to approach, study and understand the complex nature of gender. Still, as gender constructions, ideations and reformulations progress, conceptualising and understanding the myriad challenges that women experience, attendant complexities have necessitated an urgency for specificity in focus and consequently the prioritisation of feminist thinking. Accordingly, the turn of institutions to feminist methodologies may be described as a coming back to the initial starting point and a departure from gender reasonings which have carried additional baggage, hindering

women from walking towards their desired destination. One might then ask what a re-emphasis of feminist methodologies would be contributing to research in the social sciences and humanities.

Currently deployed in academia are feminist methods such as Intersectionality, Embodiment, Standpoint, Relationality, Positionality, Reflexivity and so on. We should also not forget Womanism, Motherism, Nego-feminism, Stiwanism and how they connect to feminist methodologies. With these in mind, the first time I tried to write a feminist article using human hair to theorise the material, reviewers' rejection did not permit the article to see the light of day. It was my first experience of the methodological melee I must contend with, and informed my quest to identify what is expected to change when we shift from 'gender' to 'feminist' methodologies.

Here, I propose a reasoning that adopts feminism itself as the methodology, comprising of ideas, concepts, theories and critical analysis of lived experiences. Within this approach, I present a practical model by arguing that what the embrace of feminist methodologies could contribute to research is a holistic agenda encompassing writing women into research, connecting research with action, and fashioning platforms for advocating for change. Using feminist methodologies, hitherto unreadable contexts can become decipherable, enabling them to be subjected to the test of praxis so that parity and knowledge gaps can be closed in good time. This turn towards feminist methodologies is an intentional attempt to reclaim feminism.

### **Content and Contexts of Feminist Methodologies**

Despite conceptual breakthroughs and the notable progress made by gender research in Africa, political will to implement feminist programmes remain low or absent. Contributing to this is a wobbly researcher-civil society-grassroots link. With the prevalent gender methodologies, the end was sidelined while the means was romanticised. My argument here is that methodologies have stayed for too long within the confines of the academy. Research fields have remained a space to harvest data, yet we often write the data into studies without returning to the field to see to how findings may trigger the desired change.

In the words of Jane Bennet:

The demands of our work, and the institutional and organizational conventions through which we channel it frequently leave us neither time nor direction in terms of how to actually think through the meaning of 'doing research' in our contexts (Bennett 2009: 4–5).

To address this, Mama (2011) puts forward three approaches: (1) research on activism, (2) research by activists, and (3) research for activism. While these three are laudable, the know-how for achieving their goals vary. Sadly, the academia seems to have majored in (1) – research on activism – leaving (2) and (3) behind.

Since feminism is an amalgam of ideologies, research, activism, connecting ideas, experiences, and realities, it is also expected to draw from the actual day-to-day practices of groups of people who have traditionally been excluded from the production of academic

knowledge. A major contribution that feminist methodologies bring to scholarship is a content-context nexus, which consequently becomes the continuum encompassing researchers, development practitioners and the 'data mines' which were initially separated from other stakeholders.

An embrace of feminist methodologies would mean codifying, for example, what the fabrics say; what weaving implies; how we connect the rhythms and lyrics of songs; why culinary matters matter in discourses of women's rights, health, economics, politics; and so on. What would constitute feminist ethnography, digital feminism, feminist philosophy, among others? This implies attempts to create and recognise different entry points into systems beyond the pages of journals and books. Further to these, how may a grassroots woman be informed that she is feminist? How may translations of research allow for an appreciation of how respondents/ study participants feature in research and how the data obtained from them are utilised? How may the scourge of extraction and expulsion be curbed in research? How may feminist labour be captured and expressed so that it is performed with community understanding in a way that connects the woman on the street with feminism; an approach that translates online activism to offline actions?

I acknowledge that there are several roads into feminist methodological thinking, and present the WORDOC Model for Bridging the Research-Praxis Divide in Feminist Methodologies here as a contribution to the discussion. I call it the WORDOC Methodological Bridge-building

Model. The building blocks for this model include co-creation, mentoring, as well as protecting strategic stakeholder choices. Focused on writing people into research and research into people, the model accounts for reflexivity, narrative development, naming, shaming, theorising and ultimately decolonising.

### The WORDOC Methodological Bridge-building Model

I enter the conversation by citing three of my works, all published in 2020:

1. 'Hairiness and Hairlessness (Omotoso 2020a) which explains that, in spite of their shared epistemic invisibility, there is a divide between elite women and grassroots communities;
2. 'When the Hairy Suffers Baldness' (Omotoso 2020b) which explains the how different categories of women are not heard, despite their visibility in spheres of influence, and
3. 'Acada-activism' (Omotoso 2020c) which expresses the havoc wreaked when history writes women in the academia out of the narratives of feminist struggles.

These three works encouraged synergies between the work of government and the masses, older and younger female academics, international development partners and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The combined effect of this 'symbiotic interactionism'<sup>1</sup> suffered a setback due to political instabilities of the mid-1990s as well as institutional challenges following the NGO-isation of feminist struggles, bifurcation of academia-civil society engagements, and the way feminist studies were shelved as

the work of development partners and grassroots research fields/ data mines went in different directions. The 2000s have marked the high point of the WORDOC Methodological Bridge-Building Model with her multi-stakeholder approach to research, teaching, training, and policy advocacy. Some examples of this work are presented below.

**a. The WORDOC monthly seminar series** is a platform to present emerging trends, feminist theories, research reports, and so on. We began to ponder on:

- i. How to promote research uptake and bring research study results to end-users in intersectional contexts. This space allows for communities outside the academy to critique theories, thereby transcending the tradition of those in academia 'speaking to ourselves'.
- ii. How to deal with reflexivity and positional distortions. This is where fundamental research issues are raised. For instance, would studies conducted by any researchers funded from the Global North still be valid when they describe their research participants in demeaning terms? This is where several research dilemmas are addressed from other stakeholders' points of view.

**b. An Annual International Women's Day Celebration:** this event brings elite women together to evaluate progress especially as they pertain to national issues:

- i. We provide space for conversations with policymakers.
- ii. We challenge technocratic fragmentations resulting from narrowly developed works on gender in Africa. For example, the 2022 edition was a reflection



meeting on strategies of engagement considering the five gender bills rejected by the Nigerian parliament. On other occasions, we call press conferences to discuss selected government policies and how they affect women.

**c. An Annual International Day for Grassroots Women:** this event brings women out of their usual environments into an academic environment to discuss pressing issues, research findings, and possibilities for collaboration.

- i. This event is an opportunity for hidden issues to be revealed, and grassroots voices to be amplified. In the 2019 edition, a grassroots participant expressed her dissatisfaction with the way reporting on children's basic education performance has changed. She argued that the absence of red pen marks on report cards have deprived non-literate parents of the ability to visually assess how their children are performing at school.
- ii. This event is an opportunity to engage with alternative, pragmatic methodologies. The standard practice of obtaining written consent from study participants was queried by certain grassroots community members who refuse to append their signatures on any document they cannot read, lest they ignorantly give up their property. When study participants refuse to fill out a consent form, claiming that their presence is sufficient to constitute consent, does the Institutional Review Board (IRB) format as we have accepted it work for our systems, or we need to adapt it? What would be the way forward when such conventional methodologies are challenged?
- iii. These women-only meetings also allow for women to express views on difficult socio-political

issues which they might not express at a mixed meeting. An edition dedicated to women in politics offered the crab syndrome analysis of barriers to middle-level female academic leadership in Nigeria (see Omotoso 2020d). Grassroots women met with the elite community to share views on why women do not vote for women candidates. They argued that women remove the ladders for other women when they reach the top, while men extend the ladders so that more women can rise.

- iv. These events seek indigenous knowledge remedies for social vices. At a session on the prevalence of domestic violence and child molestation, grassroots women shared long-established strategies to protect girls from rape and molestation. Colleagues agreed that information obtained from these meeting is often more detailed than information obtained in the field.

**d. The Annual WORDOC Girls' Summit** is a deliberate space where young girls are encouraged to take on feminist traditions. This is where WORDOC tests whether its methodology is underpinned by emotional intelligence, and it helps build a space for 'catch-them-young' feminist capacity building (see Omotoso and Ogbekor 2023).

Feminist methodologies beyond writing also entail being intentional about entering 'closed', 'sacred' spaces and seeking allies who can provide access to those spaces. Indeed, when methodologies are brought under scrutiny, unexpected findings may surface.

**Conclusion**

Feminist methodologies must be subjected to the test of praxis if parity and knowledge gaps are to be closed in good time.

Feminist methodologies capture teaching, research, and activism for change. Our turn towards feminist methodologies is an intentional attempt for us to reclaim feminism. Any feminist methodology should enable the analysis of power relations, engage with positionality, identify oppression, and ultimately re-position women by augmenting their status and promoting their well-being across spheres. For optimal results, feminist methodologies must also connect with the field and present the academy as plausible vehicle for achieving these goals. Consequently, for feminist research to challenge power and bring about the desired change at a quicker pace, feminist methodologies must recommit to bridging the research-praxis gap, where knowledge production rests on meanings and experiences. If we agree that it should be about co-creation, mentoring, strategic stakeholder choice, writing people into research and writing research into people, can CODESRIA create a framework of accountability on research-praxis breakthroughs?

**Note**

1. Symbiotic interactionism presupposes partnership and support to reduce the top-bottom divides between women. WORDOC studies have shown a steady growth of women into higher education leadership through conscious efforts based on cooperativism, peer mentoring and feminist solidarity, to increase women's representation and women's progression to senior management (see Oyelude and Omotoso 2019).

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## Post-doctoral 'Studies' in Africa: Are we Witnessing the Birth of a New Terminal Degree?

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**D**uring the World Science Forum held in December 2022 in Cape Town, South Africa, Peer-learning for Emerging Researchers' Knowledge and Advancement (PERKA) convened a high-level critical reflection on early-career researcher development in the post-PhD phase. During the closing session of the event, and with a certain degree of trepidation, we witnessed the launching of a set of guidelines for designing and implementing impactful post-PhD support programmes in Africa.

Based on experiences gathered from 10 African post-PhD support initiatives and the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) Centres of Excellence,<sup>1</sup> these guidelines are meant to steer the implementation of such initiatives across the continent. After two

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days of discussion, it was clear to us that the urgent search for workable models was motivated by a strong push for post-PhD standardisation. The driving forces behind the increasing demand for post-doctoral and early career researcher programmes are now also starting to call for more

structured and institutionalised forms of post-doctoral programmes within African universities.

Through the voices of those pushing for standardisation of post-docs and early career research programmes on the grounds of addressing the insufficiencies of currently available doctoral training, universities in Africa may be witnessing the early stages of the birth of a new tertiary higher education qualification.

The research hypothesis here is that post-doctoral training seems to be rapidly developing into a new terminal degree following the untimely devaluation of the doctorate as a terminal university qualification.

While these developments seem to be a logical follow-on from successful investments in doctoral

training in Africa to fulfil the need for a more qualified university professoriate, they may also lead to the premature placement of post-docs at an early stage of academic transition, experimentation and professional development in African universities, which, as research has demonstrated, are often not invested in research as their core academic activity (Felleson and Mählck 2013).

Assumptions that investing in quickly generating large numbers of doctoral graduates in Africa would lead to more knowledge economy/ society jobs on the continent have been disproved. There is no direct correlation between the number of doctorate holders in many countries in the Global South and the number of knowledge economy/ society jobs (Hamdan et al. 2020).

Possessing a doctorate is still not regarded as a minimum entry-level requirement in most African countries for the academic profession, because teaching is typically regarded as its core activity. As universities in Africa become 'diploma mills' (Paterson and Luescher 2022), we have witnessed the rapid devaluation of university degrees and the premature placement of doctoral graduates in academic positions at the same time as candidates without doctoral degrees are also being appointed into other academic positions.

The 'structure of the cognitariat' (Newfield 2010) in most African economies is such that those economies are struggling to jump-start industries that mainly require blue collar, factor-driven economy labour, as can be seen in Mozambique, which is experiencing a boom in the discovery of natural resources such as oil and gas.

The pundits who assume there is a large-scale demand for so-called knowledge workers to take up knowledge economy jobs fail to grasp that the unemployment of highly qualified professionals such as engineers is not because they are unqualified, but because the structure of the economy in many African countries does not require personnel with this level of professional skills.

Job opportunities for doctorate holders, including post-docs, are still mainly in higher education institutions, where they are employed as teaching staff, especially by public institutions (CHE 2022). However, a doctorate is seldom mandatory for academics in private higher education institutions because their jobs consist mainly of teaching duties. As long as public higher education institutions have no budget for research, and private institutions have no reasons to invest in research, as this is completely disconnected from the needs of the market, the main employment prospects for doctorates and post-docs will remain in academia.

Academic institutions in most African countries have no significant incentive to create research careers within the current structure of the academic profession. The research expertise and profile of most African academics is therefore not necessarily built as an integral part of their academic work, but as a subsidiary ad hoc activity, generally requiring individual (financial and time) investment in an academic context that is seldom conducive to nurturing a research culture and career.

The implication here is that that post-doc or early career research programmes referred to above are proposing a solution to a problem

that does not yet exist. The rise of the post-doc is an important feature of the academic job crisis in Western societies prematurely transplanted into the African context. The disconcerting signs of its premature metamorphosis into a new terminal degree reveals both a lack of understanding of the current state of the academic profession in Africa, and a propensity for importing ready-made solutions for a set of problems that have not yet been adequately described.

In Europe, the post-doc emerged mostly as a practical and temporary solution for dealing with the lack of fit between the small number of available tenured and tenure-track academic positions and the large number of doctoral graduates (Horta 2009). While there is a slowly growing number of doctoral graduates in many African countries, there is no convincing evidence of a similar mismatch between the number of academic vacancies and the number of doctoral graduates.

In Europe, while waiting for a job opportunity in academia or in a non-academic career, post-docs engage in research, often milking data from their doctorates and disseminating results through publications, whereas in Africa, a significant number of academics start their teaching careers without a doctorate, and therefore consider the post-doc as a sabbatical, as well as a career-advancing opportunity, that is, a requirement for promotion. As the doctorate slowly becomes a minimum entry requirement into the academic profession, the trend may be changing. However, more data is needed to determine the extent to which there is a mismatch between the number of vacancies in African academia and the demand for academic jobs by holders of doctoral degrees.



This is particularly important considering two of several reasons. Firstly, a significant number of academics in African universities still pursue doctoral studies mostly for promotion into higher academic and managerial ranks, not necessarily or primarily for mastering their research capabilities. Accordingly, the increasing politicisation, conflict, and competition for top and middle-range academic managerial positions in the faculties is linked to the increase in the number of doctorate holders who have no clear research career pathway.

The solution then is not to create post-doc positions, especially as most of the doctoral graduates already hold academic teaching positions. Instead, universities in Africa need to create more explicit research careers and, when necessary, clearly integrate the research component into academic careers' job descriptions and workload. Creating more post-doc positions, often involving turning long-standing non-tenured professional positions into positions for post-docs, and heeding the calls for more structured and institutionalised programmes, will simply exacerbate the lack of incentives for post-docs to pursue academic research careers.

At the moment, the incentives for obtaining a doctorate to advance a research career is less attractive than obtaining one to qualify for an academic managerial position with the associated control over resources including exercising power over established academics with a good research profile, which the recently launched Carnegie-sponsored Guidelines for Post-Docs describe as 'independent researchers' (IRs) (Mentz-Coetzee and Sienaert 2022).

A major problem with this classification is that it mixes two kinds of criteria on the same scale: the education degree, and the academic rank, including roles performed in research teams and fund-raising. The status of IR is viewed as the final stage in a process which starts with obtaining an undergraduate university degree, moving on a Master's or PhD, and then progressing to becoming an IR. In most universities in Africa, the academic profession, including the mastering of research, is still not necessarily established only by the university degree, but by seniority in academic rank.

Secondly, in most universities in Africa, an academic career is often devoid of a research component, although publications have become an increasingly important requirement for promotion. Research is still not a major integral part of academic work and life, even though the rhetoric says the contrary. However, overwhelming evidence shows that, apart from few institutions that have decided to pursue a more explicit intensive research agenda and profile, most universities in Africa do not have a designated budget line for research. It is a well-established fact that research in African universities is often and mostly sponsored by external funders. This means that the academic profession in most universities in Africa is still designed for a teaching career, not for a research career. Conflating the pursuit of a post-doc position with a pathway towards a research career can therefore be misleading.

Some of the academic management conflicts in faculties and academic units referred to above are a result of the allocation of teaching workload to academic staff. The research component of an academic position is seldom acknowledged

in staff timesheets, even though the production of research outputs is now paradoxically becoming a requirement for promotion in the academic ranks.

This paradox is the visible face of a higher education system and its institutions which reflect both a lack of nominal internal differentiation, and a lack of functional differentiation in the academic profession, work, and career.

This is not always the case. In some higher education systems and institutions, the academic profession and career path are differentiated according to institutional types, academic units and profiles of those pursuing teaching and research careers or some combined version of the two.

For example, in Germany, academics pursuing their academic careers in a university of applied sciences – though encouraged and depending on the discipline – are not necessarily required to hold a doctoral degree. However, work experience of at least three years outside the academy (e.g., in industry) is a must to take up a position at this type of higher education institution. By contrast, the main requirement for a research career and eligibility for a full professorship in a comprehensive university (a civil servant position in Germany) requires holding a doctorate and aggregated other forms of post-doctoral training, such as habilitation in social sciences and the arts and humanities (DAAD 2020).

While the specifics of what constitutes a terminal degree in most of the world's higher education systems varies, depending on academic discipline and field of study, for the most part, the doctoral degree is considered the highest-level degree in most systems.

In conclusion, the relevant questions to be asked about the rise of the post-doc in Africa and the calls for structured and institutionalised programmes are: What is the post-doc for and what is its purpose in universities in Africa? What is the problem for which the post-doc is a solution in universities in Africa? Until we convincingly address these questions, after examining the structure of the academic profession in Africa, we run the risk of prematurely creating another unnecessary terminal university degree.

### Note

1. See: <https://arua.org.za/centres-of-excellence/>.

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## Déconstruire les colonialités pour une vision renouvelée du développement en Afrique

Voilà donc cinquante ans que le Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique (Codesria) s'attèle à la production de connaissances afin d'assurer la visibilité de l'Afrique dans le monde du savoir. L'apport de l'Afrique à l'histoire intellectuelle du monde reste, en effet, peu connu. Dans une conférence abordant les paradoxes qui fondent l'invisibilisation, la réification et la vassalisation de la pensée africaine, pourtant bien réelle, antérieure et audible, Iba Der Thiam, rappelait que «le monde négro-africain est, dans l'état actuel des connaissances, celui qui peut se réclamer de la plus ancienne histoire dans la trajectoire plurimillénaire de la très longue aventure humaine. C'est en Afrique qu'on situe le berceau de l'humanité. C'est, aussi sur son sol que se sont développées toutes les différentes phases du processus d'homínisation.»

Parmi ces paradoxes :

«[Pourquoi notre continent a-t-il autant de mal] au plan des idées, des concepts, des symboles, des valeurs et des références à se libérer des pesanteurs du passé, des préjugés hérités du système colonial, de l'ethnocentrisme et de l'apriorisme, des clichés, des comportements et des attitudes générés par des siècles d'endoctrinement, d'obscurantisme, de falsification des faits et de travestissements de la

### Marèma Touré

Vice-présidente du Comité  
scientifique  
Dakar, Sénégal

vérité, "de mensonge culturel", pour parler comme le regretté et sémillant Cheikh Anta Diop? [...] Les mouvements pan-noirs du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et du début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle ont attiré, très tôt, l'attention sur les fastes de l'Égypte pharaonique, de l'Éthiopie antique et sur l'éclat que l'humanisme du Soudan nigérien a développé du VIII<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, au moins.» (Thiam 2009)

Le Codesria s'inscrit dans cette prestigieuse lignée. Cinquante ans de déconstruction de l'image mutilée de l'Afrique que les sciences sociales et les humanités fondées sur la «bibliothèque coloniale» ont forgée et véhiculée, cela se célèbre! C'est avec enthousiasme que je m'associe à la fête. Mais il ne s'agit nullement d'une auto-glorification.

La célébration de cet événement doit se passer de façon scientifique. C'est un memento pour contribuer au bilan des acquis satisfaisants de cinq décennies d'existence, pour analyser, comprendre et rétablir les réalités tronquées de l'Afrique; faire valoir nos points de vue sur notre continent et le monde entier. C'est aussi l'occasion d'identifier

les nœuds qu'il reste à défaire au double niveau de la communauté des chercheur-e-s et des gouvernants africains qui peinent à soutenir la recherche pour le développement de nos pays.

En effet, dès sa création, le Codesria s'est attelé sans faille à la tâche urgente de décoloniser les savoirs scientifiques pour faire face aux défis de l'Afrique. Son action s'est étendue à toutes les frontières tributaires des asymétries inhérentes à l'ordre épistémologique international, pour le développement inclusif, équitable et durable du continent.

En ma double qualité de vice-présidente du Comité scientifique du Codesria et de cheffe (sortante) de la section des sciences humaines et sociales du Bureau régional de l'Unesco pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest-Sahel (SHS-BREDA) pendant les douze dernières années, ma contribution s'appuie sur quelques points saillants de mon expérience avec le Conseil.

Je m'appesantis, ici, sur une partie des conclusions de l'importante session plénière sur le thème «Décoloniser la recherche, questionner les masculinités épistémiques : une condition indispensable pour des SHS plus égalitaires, plus inclusives et plus intégratives en Afrique!» que j'ai conduite en décembre 2018 au cours de la 15<sup>e</sup> Assemblée générale.



## Déconstruire les colonialités structurantes en Afrique

La volonté d'«extension de l'État moderne à l'ensemble du monde» a, entre autres, induit la vassalité des savoirs africains. Pour pallier l'absence du sujet africain, des systèmes de pensée endogènes et de la culture africaine dans l'historiographie, les récits et les autres modalités qui informent la fabrique de l'orthodoxie théorique, notamment les concepts a-historiques de développement, de démocratie et de gouvernance, il importe de déconstruire la triple colonialité du pouvoir, de l'État et des savoirs qui pèse sur l'Afrique (Lander 2000 ; Quijano 2007).

Notre continent est, en effet, victime de nombreux préjugés qui trouvent leur fondement dans la croyance imaginaire que «l'Europe aurait une civilisation là où l'Afrique dispose seulement d'une culture. L'Europe aurait un système juridique rationnel là où l'Afrique n'a que des coutumes. L'Europe aurait une science et l'Afrique des superstitions. L'Europe aurait des droits de l'homme universels et l'Afrique des traditions.» (Howard 2010)

Ces colonialités, à la base de l'assassinat délibéré de plusieurs langues et cultures africaines, de systèmes de connaissances et de pensée africains, sont la résultante du projet occidental de domination économique et culturel. Toute subordination épistémologique passe, en effet, par l'occultation du dominé dans le discours dominant. Les linguicides et épistémicides subis par notre continent depuis le XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle sont une cause principale de l'assujettissement actuel de la pensée africaine dans les systèmes épistémiques dominants. L'invisibilisation des savoirs autochtones, qui sont dans

une très large mesure des savoirs féminins, fait des Africaines les principales victimes de ces matrices culturicides. Elle est à la source de la marginalisation de l'Afrique dans les processus de conceptualisation, de théorisation du développement et de la démocratie dans nos propres territoires.

À travers toute la planète, les peuples se sont structurés autour de leurs savoirs, de leurs croyances, de leurs mythes, de leurs rites, de leurs cultes et de leurs valeurs. Il n'y a pas de nations africaines, sujettes de leur propre devenir, sans cultures africaines (Fall 2011). Le développement est une notion, certes, polysémique, mais, quelle qu'en soit la définition, sa matérialisation reste l'aboutissement d'un processus de transformation sociale et mentale.

Or l'analyse des interrelations entre la culture et le développement en Afrique révèle la longue absence de l'Africain (plus encore de l'Africaine) et la marginalisation de sa culture dans les paradigmes dominants. «Pendant trop longtemps, les spécialistes africains en sciences sociales ont appliqué point par point à l'Afrique des concepts, des idées, des terminologies et des théories créés dans d'autres pays à l'intention d'autres sociétés et d'autres économies [...] Il nous faut d'urgence [les] africaniser», notait déjà, en 1982, le concepteur du Plan d'action de Lagos (Adedeji 1982).

Depuis la conférence de Bandung de 1955, la colonialité des savoirs a été contestée partout dans le tiers-monde. En Amérique latine, les théoriciens de la dépendance ont fait école. Cette perspective, soutenue par la Commission économique pour l'Amérique latine (Cepal), trouve ses ramifications dans les Conseil et Forum latino-

américain des sciences sociales (Clacso et Flacso) et aujourd'hui chez les tenants du projet décolonial. En Asie, l'Association asiatique d'études politiques et internationales (Apisa) a été au centre de la controverse.

Parallèlement, en Afrique, c'est à Dakar, dans les murs de l'Institut africain du développement économique et de la planification (Idep), un démembrement de la Commission économique pour l'Afrique (CEA), que Samir Amin, un vaillant Africain au centre de la contestation des théories importées, avec ses «camarades», a créé, en 1973, le Codesria. Le Conseil a d'ailleurs son siège dans cette ville symbolique, comme l'Association des femmes africaines pour la recherche et le développement (Afarid), sa fille institutionnelle, le Forum du tiers-monde, et, plus récemment, les «Ateliers de la pensée» créés en 2016.

Plusieurs générations d'intellectuels-les ont ainsi participé à la remise en cause de la perspective hégémonique, qui privilégie la référence à une épistémè eurocentrique et délégitime toutes les autres formes de savoir que celles produites par la science moderne occidentale (Lander 2000 ; Quijano 2007). De la première génération constituée par les pères des indépendances et leurs contemporains à la plus récente, ils/elles ont façonné des connaissances endogènes pouvant soutenir le renouvellement des narratifs sur le continent.

L'action rédemptrice du Conseil pour la refondation des savoirs est en droite ligne avec le projet de décolonisation de l'esprit porté par des penseurs africains de diverses générations. Ce projet a été formalisé par Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1986) et Chinweizu (1987),

qui posent les bases nécessaires à la ré-imaginer des récits africains. À l'instar de Cheikh Anta Diop, Ngugi met l'accent sur l'importance des langues africaines dans la construction d'une Afrique globale et rejette le découpage issu de la conférence de Berlin. S'inscrivant dans la lignée postmoderniste, Chinweizu ne cautionne certes pas le total rejet des apports étrangers, considérés comme une partie de la moisson de l'expérience humaine, mais appelle à démanteler les croyances suprématistes et les structures qui les soutiennent en Afrique.

La nuance subtile qui distingue les défenseurs d'une pensée décoloniale et ceux d'une pensée non coloniale apparaît d'ailleurs dans l'implicite de ces positions. Que mille écoles rivalisent pour un printemps de la pensée africaine! Mais quelle que soit la posture adoptée, «l'Afrique entière a besoin de se doter d'une vision stratégique partagée, pour promouvoir sa nécessaire transformation structurelle» (Sanga 2017).

La tâche demeure toutefois ardue. En dépit des bémols induits par notre Conseil, le regard porté sur le continent reste réducteur et réifiant. Les visions stratégiques exogènes et souvent univoques sont encore dominantes. Ces dernières années en Afrique, notamment au Sahel, «la coopération internationale a buté sur des conflits de perception entre les conceptions d'en haut et les compréhensions – ou incompréhensions – locales» (Sambe 2020), le quotidien des gens a été effacé des narratifs institutionnels les privant de l'ancrage social pourtant indispensable au nexus humanitaire-développement, au profit d'une vision mécanique, économiciste et sécuritaire (Unesco 2020).

Les dimensions humaine, spirituelle et culturelle sont souvent occultées dans les analyses. L'humain et les cultures, dans leurs interactions et complexités, semblent absents de la création de sens. Ce sont finalement les perceptions des Africain-e-s qui sont tronquées. Les continuités et discontinuités historiques constituent pourtant les liens temporels entre passé, présent et futur. Cette lecture réductrice est une des sources du sentiment d'abandon vécu par les jeunes et les communautés, ballottés entre traditions et modernité, dont le bien-être semble oublié.

Cette atrophie est une forme de dépossession affaiblissant les socles culturels fondateurs des sociétés. Elle participe au fossé intergénérationnel, à l'impuissance d'une jeunesse influençable manquant de repères, au choc d'une modernité en négociation avec les traditions (Konate 2008) et finalement à l'installation durable de cette instabilité tant décriée. La palabre est la pratique de la nuance vertueuse. L'exigence intellectuelle et libératoire de l'Afrique, portée par le Codesria et ses organisations sœurs, se situe dans la confrontation des perceptions et des points de vue dans un mouvement dynamique et didactique des pensées (Unesco 2020).

### **Pour une vision renouvelée du développement en Afrique**

En Afrique plus que partout ailleurs, le développement, en tant que concept, théorie et pratique, loin d'être «un processus propre à la société qui se développe» s'apparente à «la forme post-coloniale de l'intervention des rapports sociaux mondialement dominants, là où ils interviennent comme des forces extérieures» (Achard 1984:843). Ceux qui ont

été classés «hors de l'histoire» sont ainsi devenus les objets alternativement maternés ou fustigés du discours humaniste de l'émancipation économique et de l'artillerie pernicieuse d'un néolibéralisme triomphant et arrogant.

Les variations du tempo sur la «démocratie» et la «participation» n'ont nullement empêché les initiatives entreprises en Afrique d'être résolument guidées par une volonté d'y appliquer des moyens qui ont fait leurs preuves ailleurs et d'en espérer les mêmes effets, sans tenir compte des dynamiques locales. Les populations africaines sont les «cibles momifiées», mal écoutées ou mal entendues, d'un arsenal de théories et de stratégies relevant de logiques qui leur sont extérieures. Ces stratégies, doublées d'une multitude de mesures présentées comme inévitables et dont le «faire» induit sur elles des conséquences sociologiques non examinées, s'avèrent inopérantes (Touré 1997).

Comme dans l'analyse des conséquences néfastes des programmes d'ajustement structurel mis en œuvre en Afrique au début des années 1980, le Codesria a été à l'avant-garde de la contestation du modèle développementaliste, dont la crise de l'expansion a été à la base. Aujourd'hui, il en est de même pour la critique du concept clé en main d'émergence, que l'on retrouve partout en Afrique, sous l'inspiration du Fonds monétaire international (FMI). Si, *urbi et orbi*, l'émergence est définie comme la «transformation structurelle des économies», l'on constate trop souvent que, dans sa conceptualisation comme dans ses orientations, ce concept ignore royalement ou tout au moins réduit drastiquement les dimensions sociales et mentales.

Jimi Adesina et ses coéditeurs ont montré qu'à plusieurs égards, les perspectives de développement de l'Afrique sont coincées au sein d'un éventail de pratiques et de discours néolibéraux. Le continent s'est appuyé sur une notion de développement et sur des programmes dont l'origine et les objectifs sont étrangers à la majorité de ses habitants, qui n'ont pas toujours abordé les bonnes questions ou ne l'ont pas fait de la bonne manière (Adesina *et al.* 2005).

Promus par les institutions financières internationales, les concepts de développement et d'émergence, à l'instar des programmes d'ajustement structurel, répondent à l'optique de promouvoir une économie de marché conforme aux critères de l'orthodoxie libérale tout en occultant les dimensions culturelle et mentale, qui devraient pourtant avoir une portée motrice dans les transformations souhaitées.

Évoquant le consensus de Washington de 1985 défini comme une sorte de décalogue du modèle et des politiques néolibérales appliquées dans les pays du tiers-monde, Carlos Lopes souligne que dans ce contexte de transition du bipolaire au multipolaire, il devient plus aisé de comprendre ce que Samir Amin (1986) a appelé la périphérie par rapport au centre, au cœur d'une géopolitique mondiale où l'Afrique subit plus qu'elle ne décide de son propre sort. Ainsi se précise la pertinence de sa thèse de la déconnexion pour un développement endogène et autocentré, supplantant l'idée d'un «développement de l'humanité» qui obligerait les pays les «moins avancés» (ou «en voie de développement») à suivre la voie déjà tracée par les pays «avancés» ou «développés» (Lopes 2021).

Les avancées réalisées dans le domaine des sciences sociales, pourtant indispensables pour amarrer l'analyse à des contextes socioculturels différents en interaction permanente en Afrique, semblent également être écartées des visions et diagnostics réalisés par les bailleurs de fonds. Dans ces discontinuités et conflits intérieurs, les clés de lectures pour répondre aux défis multidimensionnels devraient être également multidimensionnelles (Unesco 2020).

Le rejet de l'idéologie dominante qui occulte la centralité de l'humain et de sa culture est aussi à la base de l'aversion de Joseph Ki-Zerbo envers le mimétisme d'un «développement clé en main». Il appelle à la créativité et à l'imagination pour un «développement endogène» (Badini 1999) :

«Il ne s'agit plus tellement de chanter la négritude, mais d'agir. Il ne s'agit pas de se lamenter sur un paradis perdu, car il n'y a pas de paradis perdu. Il ne s'agit pas de roucouler notre peine, ni de célébrer nos valeurs passées, mais de transformer notre propre moi collectif afin d'y trouver des raisons d'espérer.» (Ki-Zerbo 1992)

Au Codesria et ailleurs, les élites africaines, activement engagées dans des réflexions alternatives, ont vigoureusement appelé à changer le logiciel social et à valoriser la culture pour fonder un autre paradigme du développement. Le progrès social exige, certes, la transformation qualitative de l'environnement socioéconomique, mais, au-delà, il doit viser l'épanouissement de la personne humaine. Les processus de développement ne sont pas uniquement liés à des facteurs économiques et sociaux. Ils appellent aussi des dimensions

culturelles et spirituelles. Ils convoquent fondamentalement la question de l'humain et par conséquent, celle de l'histoire et des valeurs, de la compréhension de soi et les interactions sociales (Touré 1997).

Du côté de l'Afrique des peuples également, des indices multiformes montrent que des changements fondamentaux sont en train de s'opérer. Partout en Afrique et dans les autres pays «traditionnellement» dominés, les populations développent des stratégies de résistance et/ou de récupération du discours savant que l'on tient sur elles. Des intellectuels africains (femmes et hommes) prennent de plus en plus la parole pour offrir des lectures de leurs propres réalités. Même si leur influence est encore timide, ils ont réussi à rompre le monopole des autres sur la théorisation de leur situation passée, présente et à venir, pour asseoir les bases d'un «nouvel ordre intellectuel mondial» (Touré 2002).

La centralité de la culture dans le développement est aussi aux sources de la pensée de Julius Nyerere. Pour le père de l'indépendance tanzanien, le développement, dans sa triple dimension qualitative, quantitative et compétitive, doit être conçu comme un processus complet et total, qui, par conséquent, dépasse la dimension économique, pour recouvrir l'éducationnel et le culturel. En intégrant trois dimensions fondamentales que sont l'être, l'avoir et l'originalité, Celestin Delanga (2018) décline une réflexion solide dans le répertoire théorique africain et permet de valoriser des secteurs souvent négligés comme celui de l'économie informelle (Weber 2009) qui s'enracine dans un terreau culturel local.



C'est donc en partant de ces modèles endogènes qui descendent jusqu'aux racines de leurs destinées que les pays de l'Afrique pourraient mobiliser leur riche héritage, leurs savoirs autochtones, leurs identités et valeurs culturelles pour l'éclosion de leur potentiel socioculturel, démographique et économique. La «réalisation des grandes aspirations de l'Afrique pourrait [ainsi] marquer le début d'une renaissance, annonçant une ère de développement économique et social sans précédent, de cohésion sociale, de véritable dialogue et de synergies inexploitées entre les différents acteurs sociaux et politiques» (Sahel 2043).

Le Codesria a joué un rôle central dans le processus de refondation des épistémès en Afrique. Il doit rester une sentinelle vaillante pour saisir l'opportunité de construire le nouveau projet de société, irrigué par une éducation et une recherche adaptées, dont l'Afrique a besoin pour son essor, pour ré-imaginer les modèles authentiques et culturellement centrés, pour un développement à la fois «humain et humanisant» du continent (Adedeji 1983).

### Pour ne pas conclure

Les rapports inégalitaires qui caractérisent les conditions de production des connaissances scientifiques sont encore des obstacles importants à la liberté de pensée, mais des avancées substantielles ont été enregistrées en Afrique. Si les perspectives dominantes dans les sciences sociales continuent d'exercer la plus grande influence, leur hégémonie est de plus en plus remise en cause, surtout en Afrique, avec l'irruption de nouveaux acteurs, qui nourrissent une parole scientifique

et formulent des énoncés sur leurs propres situations.

Avec l'action du Codesria et des autres, notre continent est redevenu une partie prenante dans le commerce inévitable des idées qui fonde le système monde. Or cette posture exige plus l'affirmation de ses capacités et moyens pour exporter les idées de son propre cru que la confirmation de sa disposition à consommer des idées importées. La communauté africaine des social-scientistes est appelée à rendre compte des modalités au travers desquelles l'Afrique a été pensée. Il s'agit de revisiter les manières dont les intellectuels-les, les sages et les peuples africains ont eu à décrire leurs réalités au cours de l'histoire.

Conformément au projet de notre Conseil, il nous faut continuer à faire vivre le mot d'ordre, toujours actuel de Amilcar Cabral, dont Carlos Lopes rappelle qu'il «n'a jamais opté pour la voie facile» : «Penser l'Afrique avec nos propres têtes et agir en accord avec nos réalités.» La contribution intellectuelle de ce pionnier à la libération mentale de l'Afrique ne saurait toutefois s'accommoder d'une perspective simpliste visant à promouvoir l'idée de cultures africaines fermées sur elles-mêmes. Une telle option serait contradictoire avec les exigences du monde global et n'offrirait aucune garantie d'authenticité ou d'une «pureté» fantasmagorique des cultures africaines.

La célébration de ce cinquantenaire doit donner au Codesria un nouvel élan pour poursuivre la mobilisation de nos cultures et leur potentiel de transformation positive au profit de la renaissance intellectuelle de l'Afrique, un moment de rejet de toutes les formes d'ostracisme,

une occasion pour faire de notre culture le moteur heuristique pour la consolidation d'une perspective africaine autonome dans les sciences humaines et sociales. Penser l'Afrique aujourd'hui, c'est prendre acte de l'impératif de fournir à notre continent les moyens de marquer de ses propres empreintes l'universalité plurielle ou la «pluriversalité» dans le présent et dans le futur (Touré 2014).

Fier de ses cinquante ans, en toute dignité et avec la sagesse conférée par la maturité, notre Conseil n'a que la seule issue de reprendre acte de l'impératif de réussir sa noble mission comme il l'a assumé avec brio dans le passé, depuis sa naissance. La voie est toute tracée !

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