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To Our Readers

The Nordic Africa Institute’s research programme Sexuality, Gender and Society in Africa arranged a workshop entitled Contexts of Gender in Africa on 21–24 February. The workshop brought together a new set of researchers mostly from Africa. It focused on conceptualizations of gender and on ‘thinking sexualities’. From this very exciting meeting further discussed below we have taken the opportunity to interview one of the participants from Nigeria, Dr Mary Kolawole, whom we already knew from her period as guest researcher at the Institute some years ago. We also asked one of the few male participants, Dr Kopano Ratele from the Psychology Department and Women and Gender Studies of the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, to write the first commentary for this issue of News. His research on African Masculinity is an area which is highly topical but so far little explored. His pedagogical presentation will give many of our readers insight in a new area, which explains many of the present pros and cons in the development process in Africa, and for that matter in most other regions.

The second commentary is written by Ass. Prof. Jimmy Kandeh, a Sierra Leonian by nationality but at present based at the University of Richmond, Virginia in USA. He is a member of the working group on Sierra Leone within the Institute’s research programme Post-Conflict Transition, the State and Civil Society in Africa. He relates the tale of a country which has gone through an extensive period of severe crisis and civil strife but where after strong support from the international community a democratic process—if carefully nurtured—might lead to peace and stability. Underlining the importance of the state and government performance as well as the promotion of welfare and development for democracy and peace he maps a road of hope for a very battered people who is longing for peace.

The third commentary written by Prof. Saleem Badat of the Council of Higher Education in South Africa follows up on our concern for the successful development of higher education in Africa, a subject in which many of the researchers of our Institute have been actively engaged in past years. He gives an overview and problematization of the challenges and difficulties that higher education in South Africa has to meet and the difficult decisions the government has to make in order to allow the system to produce the training and research that the country will require for its sustainable development in the future. Even if these problems might be seen as the ones of a relatively rich country, we share the view of the author that it is a question of the long-term survival of South Africa whether the government makes the right choices in this important sector of development.

We also include a debate article by our research director Henning Melber on the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). This is an increasingly relevant topic, which our Institute has monitored and discussed for some time. Another debate article, written by Alpha Fall from the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa, is on the very important topic of human rights defenders. Finally, we are happy to present a follow-up to the discussion started in the last issue of News on the situation of development research in the Nordic countries. Prof. Henrik Secher Marcussen from Roskilde University in Denmark challenges in his presentation the way the evaluation of the Danish development research was done. Although he does not question the over-all conclusions of the evaluation, he states that the way the evaluation was implemented—influenced development research negatively and has made the implementations of the recommendation more difficult. We hope that this intervention will lead to more comments on the subject, which is very close to our hearts at the Institute. In this issue, we also pay tribute to two prominent researchers and friends of the Institute: Prof. Bade Onimode and Dr Bernhard Helander. ■

Lennart Wohlgemuth
Contradictions in Constructions of African Masculinity

By: Kopano Ratele
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Rather than the yearned for comforts, the advent of a democratic dispensation in South Africa has thrown up many uncomfortable questions. Many people would agree, for example, that as the country has moved to establish a human rights culture, crime levels seem to have risen sharply and the police, courts, and correctional services so far seem unable to cope adequately. Some people would commend the African National Congress government for succeeding in providing free health services for pregnant women, poor people and young children, but many more people are baffled by the indecipherable strategy or perhaps lack of will of the government to face up to the strong indications that the spread of HIV is rampant and AIDS is plundering our communities. And while black economic empowerment has spawned a very small nouveau riche class, recent figures suggest that the poor are getting poorer, and the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing.

There is also one seemingly ‘minor’ question that some critical citizens have been trying to draw attention to because, they correctly point out, we imperil ourselves and our entire future as a country by paying insufficient mind to it. It may be that this minor fact is part of all the other contradictions South Africans are experiencing.

This fact that seems to contradict our freedom can be found in official documents of the democratic government. For instance, we saw it in the latest census forms. To be sure, one will find an apology of sorts tucked away in a footnote where the writers recognise it is a contradiction, or at least a discomforting question. But critical researchers and scholars have also been guilty of re-playing the contradiction, even while they apologise. The apology usually runs along the lines that this is for statistical purposes only, or that the concerned researchers or scholars themselves do not believe in the category used, but they need to use the category because of the history of South Africa. The question I am referring to of course is that of race—and with that strike-through it could be argued that I am sort of apologising.

Racial identities

What makes the acknowledgement of race a contradiction, it may be asked? What about race causes us to apologise? Why do I say that it could be part of all the other cultural, political, economic, and psychological contradictions of the new as of the old society? I think it is a fact that race and its small-writ politics and large one have always been and continue to be the incubus of the South African drama. In one form or another race is the problem of black communities and individuals all over the world. In South Africa, until recently, the racial aspect of our identities trumped all other forms of being. Racialised identities underpinned our everyday lives and politics. Our practices, our institutions, our histories and our politics, our relationships, prospects, needs for belonging, psychic investments and fantasies, all have always been indexed on the question of racialised identity.

Of course (racialised) identity is not an original South African preoccupation. South
Africa merely exacerbated it, precisely because South Africa believed it could solve the troubles of identity with it, even if it was to be at very great expense. Any kind of identity is inherently a puzzle with at least one piece always missing from the box. Identity is fundamentally a contradiction. And, as has been said by many commentators, what we take to be identities are always changing. So is racialised identity.

I have been talking mostly in the past tense when talking of the race puzzle in South Africa. This may lead to a misunderstanding. I should correct it. Much of South African life is still predicated on race. That remains the touchstone of a large part of our social, economic, and political affairs. We continue to believe very much in the idea of race, and this belief, to iterate, is what lies at the centre of the contradictions of our young democracy.

**Identity puzzle**

What makes the question of identity a contradiction is not just that one is sometimes forced to respond with such lumpish things as African South African male when, for instance, filling in a visa application. Yet this rhetorical awkwardness accentuates the everpresent contradictions of racial and other identities. It is important to keep this in mind especially when one is confronted with seamless, perfect ‘names’ or identities such as white South African, or African man. In other words, when there appear to be no ‘lumps’ such as ‘African culture’, which is another way of saying, when the identity ‘sticks’, that is precisely when we should be most suspicious.

Another form of the identity puzzle that could be taken up is that even in the new society the name of African, for instance, does not seem to ‘stick’ on white South African bodies or white citizens of Zimbabwe. The puzzling aspect is that this is even when the owner of the body him- or herself wants to take the identity of African on.

Still another discussion is around what could be called ‘travels of identities’. As one travels from one place to another, from home to elsewhere, from workplace to the dentist’s room or to a theatre, from continent to continent, one has to produce an identity. The identity one leaves home with, is not exactly the same as the one which is shown to a customs official, and not the same one returns home with. The example given about applying to enter another country can be used again. African people and black people generally must always travel with their race in addition to their nationality. This then begs the questions of when is or is not racial identity more consequential than national identity, and when is or is not one or the other of these more central to one’s subjectivity. I could speculate and argue that those called African South Africans are generally only South African when travelling, and largely Africans when at home, among other South Africans.

**Power and contradictions of African masculinities**

All of this points to, re-writes, re-establishes, and plays out what goes into African masculinities, how to turn young boys into African men, and some of the contradictions involved. But the contradictions I want to concern myself with here are those that hide or show power. I wish to posit that the emergence of a rich class among Africans should worry us enough to want to interrogate these African men—for most of these rich people are men—about power. We must interest ourselves about the lives of these African men not just as Africans but equally if not more urgently as men. Focusing on the sex/sexuality/gender of African males is a deliberate and productive move of disturbing the taken-for-granted nature of African-ness, and of such objects as ‘African culture’, ‘African masculinity’, ‘African womanhood’, and ‘African sexuality’. This move reveals the contradictions that inhere not only in African identities, but also the inherent contradictions of all identities.

The obvious contradiction of ‘African masculinity’ is that African males ‘share’ one part of the identities with African women and another part with white/European men. If African-ness is ‘shared’ between males and females then ‘African masculinity’ is defined not just by African males. In the same way, if ‘the thing’ that makes a man a man is something all men know or must know something about, then white/European males help in
making African men African/men. Further, masculinity is not made by males only, and there are many more different 'types' of males than in the categories of African and white/European, and in fact, more than one type of masculinity; we should actually talk about masculinities, as we should talk of identities rather than identity.

The less obvious contradiction is that African masculinities, just like other sorts of masculinities and all identities, are sets of practices that cling together around points of power. In speaking for or against a particular identity, for or against the notion of African masculinities, and in taking up or being forced to assume the identity of an African man—that is to say instead of father, physicist, footballer, lover, or chef—one is already implicated in a dialogical material world that is always structured by and around power. This means that in discussions about African masculinities certain voices carry more weight than others. This is in spite of the fact that several groups and individuals 'share' in the kind of man that ends up being built. It also means that one raises a (real) African man, as one raises a (real) white man—at least in South Africa—and does not simply raise a scientist or an athlete. This is because the phrase 'just human' is an empty one, and rather than helping us, it avoids the contradictions.

Dominant constructions of masculinity then and now
Now when one observes that the dominant construction of masculinity is still mainly of men as economic providers, these young men must have looked to their futures and their own sense of fulfilling their manly future roles with a sense of ever-increasing desperation. Indeed there was no sense of looking to the future. There was none to look forward to. These conditions then could be said to be unhappy ones for arguing for engagement in things like a (re)negotiation of male identities and male power. When one is going hungry it looks somewhat insane for some intellectual to come around speaking about opening up and allowing for multiple understandings of what it means to be a man, to be African, to be a South African in the future. As a matter of fact, the predominant sentiment among males is that the concerns of African men cannot be around 'niceties' of gender and masculinity. Back then, if gender was ever broached and dominant masculinities shown to be a problem, the reasons given for dismissing the problem would be that African males had to deal with more important stuff, 'bread and butter issues', continuing the struggle. Now, if gender is broached and dominant African masculinities shown to be a problem, they are dismissed with laughter and arguments that African males have to deal with more impor-
tant stuff, ‘bread and butter issues’, deepening democracy, building and running a country, making some money. African men, that is to say, back then and still today, do not have the luxury to forge new concepts of masculinity and new ways of relating.

‘Nouveau riche’ and violent cultures as two sides of the same coin
This kind of argument is oppressive and dangerous. Pulling apart our identities, practices and institutions and examining their constituent parts—especially those things we are convinced we cannot live without, our very history and culture, our names and lives—is always urgent. It is of such importance that it is now insufficient to merely show the rhetoric above as the tails-side of the same coin as the rhetoric that produces strong men as dominant, in charge, sexually-potent, BMW-driving, platinum Mastercard-carrying managers or owners of this or that company.

In other words, survivalist, violent, materialistic subcultures are parts of the same cloth as the capitalist greed that produces the African nouveaux arrivés. The racist patriarchal social structure of apartheid, the masculine African youth subculture, and the small band of rich Africans derive from the vampirism of capitalism that feeds and feeds off the idea of what it is to be a man. It may be shown then—contrary to what may be common sense—that rather than being free of the structures of apartheid, most of us are still caught up in, defined by and supporting oppressive discourses also supported by that racist patriarchal social structure.

I think the major point here is that refusing to admit how in raising a boy-child we are always implicated in power, is what imperils the future. In making an African man, and thus reproducing a particular, dominant identity, we must be aware that we help in the violent pull of divergent contradictory practices. Ignoring that African manhood is made within a field of power struggles that includes such things as class, sex/sexuality/gender, and of course race, provides at best a lopsided view of the realities of individual African men. The worst of it though is proceeding on the assumption of an uncritical, uncontradictory view of a shared history of racial oppression, while glossing over class and sex/sexuality/gender hierarchies is part of the epistemic and material violence that goes into constructing African masculinities.

Literature on Masculinity and Race


Mentioned in the Text

I was in Sierra Leone over the Christmas break where I participated in a workshop on post-conflict reconstruction sponsored by the Nordic Africa Institute. This was my second trip to Sierra Leone in 2001 and my fourth in the past three years. On none of those earlier visits, however, did I sense the return of hope and optimism that pervaded the atmosphere in December 2001. Christmas and the New Year coincided with the completion of disarmament, which symbolized the end of ten years of brutal insurgency that killed, maimed and displaced thousands of Sierra Leoneans. People came out in droves to celebrate Christmas and usher in the New Year—the first time they could do so in almost ten years. From all indications, the guns have gone silent in Sierra Leone although how long this will last is anybody’s guess. Consolidating peace will require more than disarmament and the holding of multiparty elections. Sustainable peace will ultimately depend on good governance and the elimination of the social injustices that gave rise to armed insurgency. Governmental performance that builds confidence and popular support for democratic institutions and processes is the key to durable peace and democratic maturation in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone’s war was caused by the untrammeled greed of the country’s political class. Predatory accumulation by incumbent political elites and their cronies eroded state capacities, impoverished society, lumpenized youth and elders alike, destroyed public confidence in state institutions and sowed the seeds of state collapse and armed rebellion. Reversing these trend lines will be a tall order and certainly not one that can be accomplished by adhering to the spoils logic of governance that has shaped politics in Sierra Leone since independence. Thus far, the incumbent government shows no signs of frontally combating the problem of corruption and taking seriously the issue of impunity for acts of corruption. Ending the culture of impunity as it relates to both acts of leadership malfeasance and human rights atrocities is critical to the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone. Many Sierra Leoneans and Liberians are hopeful that the Special UN Court that is supposed to prosecute those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone will indict both Foday Sankoh, the jailed Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader, and Charles Taylor, the warlord turned president of Liberia and chief patron of the RUF. If Slobodan Milosevic, whose crimes pale in comparison to Taylor’s, could be prosecuted, why not Taylor?

There can be no question about who ended the war in Sierra Leone—the British did with some unco-ordinated assistance from the Guinean military. Among external actors, Nigeria bore the brunt of the war in terms of combat fatalities but the Nigerians, for whatever reason, could not end the war and were almost run out of Freetown during the rebel invasion of January 1999. After flushing out rebels from Freetown in 1999, the Nigerian government announced the planned withdrawal of its forces from Sierra Leone, blaming the lack of international financial and logistical support for the pullout. The Nigerians were replaced by international peacekeepers but the latter proved to be no match for the wily rebels who proceeded to kidnap over 500 peacekeepers as a prelude to yet another attempt at overrunning Freetown and seizing power in May 2000. It was after the abduction of the UN peacekeepers and at the height of the rebel
advance on Freetown in May 2000 that Britain came to the rescue, saving the United Nations from catastrophic humiliation and preventing rebel forces from overthrowing the democratically elected government. Since then, Britain has trained and equipped the Sierra Leone army and is in the process of transforming what had become a rogue outfit into a professional army that is capable of defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. The British also pledged to deploy a rapid reaction force of 1,500 Royal Marines in the event of a threat to the city of Freetown. If the rebels could not take Freetown, this in practice meant they could not seize power by force of arms. Through their intervention in Sierra Leone, the British demonstrated that a modest force and a principled commitment by a major power can make a huge difference in convincing insurgents to lay down their arms and sue for peace.

Guinea also played a proxy role in ending the war in Sierra Leone. Guinean President Lansana Conte and Liberia’s President Charles Taylor have routinely accused each other of harboring and supporting dissidents fighting to overthrow their respective governments. With RUF rebels in control of Sierra Leone’s border with Guinea during 1999–2001, Charles Taylor enlisted his RUF allies in Northeastern Sierra Leone to carry out cross-border raids on Guinean villages and towns. This turned out to be a colossal blunder not only for Taylor, who is currently facing a growing insurgency in Lofa county, but also for the RUF, which lost many of its commanders in the Guinean misadventure. The Guineans also trained and equipped the Donsos, a local Sierra Leone militia in the diamond-rich Kono district, to go after RUF rebels, many of whom were killed in attacks coordinated with the Guinean military. Bludgeoned and hemmed in by the Guinean military and with the British retraining the Sierra Leone army and preparing for an assault on rebel positions if necessary, it must have been obvious to even the most hardened combatant that the days of their insurgency were numbered.

Ending the war in Sierra Leone received huge support from the international community. The deployment of over 16,000 peacekeepers in Sierra Leone was itself a powerful statement of international commitment to ending this conflict. Despite a potentially humiliating start, the force was able to regroup and eventually deploy throughout the country. The UN force was also responsible for disarming combatants, a task that has already been completed. In addition to its peacekeeping role, UN sanctions against Liberia’s government isolated the RUF’s main patron and source of support, making it more difficult for Charles Taylor to continue supporting the RUF. By rupturing the RUF’s umbilical attachment to Taylor, UN sanctions against the Liberian government were instrumental to ending the war in Sierra Leone.

With the RUF’s capacity to wage war apparently destroyed, Sierra Leone is scheduled to hold its first post-conflict elections for president and a new parliament in May 2002. Already a total of twenty-five political parties and presidential candidates have registered to participate in the forthcoming elections. The proliferation of parties and presidential aspirants is less a sign of the flowering of democracy than an indication of the rank opportunism of the country’s political class. Among Sierra Leone’s misfortunes is the conviction among many of its citizens (including the average high school dropout) that they are presidential material. Most of the newly registered parties are personalist vehicles of discredited politicians who still fancy themselves to be ‘stakeholders’ in the political process. Given the retinue of scoundrels seeking to unseat him, it is little wonder why many expect incumbent President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to prevail in the forthcoming elections.

Several factors favor Kabbah over his opponents. First, his opponents are generally tainted by their complicity in past dictatorships and if the election were to come down to a choice of the lesser evil, Kabbah would win easily by a wide margin. Second, the political opposition is too fragmented to pose much of a threat to the incumbent government. The Grand Alliance, which professes to represent a broad spectrum of political forces opposed to Kabbah, is a make-shift undertaking that lacks both direction and support. A disproportionate number of opposition parties are splinter reincarnations of the All People’s Congress (APC), the party generally blamed for creating the conditions that spawned war and destruction in Sierra Leone.
Kabba has further contributed to disunity in the ranks of the opposition by occasionally co-opting some opposition politicians into his cabinet. Both the fragmentation and political baggage of the opposition play to Kabba’s advantage. Third, Kabba is privileged by incumbency and can pick and choose where to invest scarce resources to secure maximum political gain. Fourth, Kabba is the immediate political beneficiary of the peace dividend and the president has been reportedly going around the country reminding voters that he ended the war. The disingenuous flavoring of this claim notwithstanding—the war ended in spite of Kabba not because of him—many Sierra Leoneans are inclined to give Kabba some of the credit for ending the war. Fifth, Kabba will be contesting the elections as the presidential candidate of the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), the party that won him the presidency in 1996. By virtue of the SLPP’s electoral hold on the southern and eastern regions of the country (no opposition party is competitive in these regions), Kabba only has to be competitive in the western region to be reelected. It is conceivable for Kabba to win the presidency without carrying the west but it is inconceivable for any of the opposition presidential aspirants to win the presidency without huge victories in the western and northern regions. If voting patterns from the 1996 elections are anything to go by, the west and the north are the two most competitive regions in the country where no party or presidential candidate can expect to score decisive victories. With the western area and northern province up for grabs (Kabba narrowly won the west in 1996) and with the rest of the country solidly behind Kabba and the SLPP, it is difficult to envision how Kabba could possibly lose the forthcoming elections.

While the elections of 2002 should help build legitimacy for the political system, what follows the elections will be critical from the standpoint of consolidating peace and democracy. Rehabilitating the capacity and image of the state will ultimately hinge upon the degree to which democracy translates into policies that combat mass deprivation and provide opportunities for citizens to realize their potentialities. Governmental performance can strengthen or weaken public support for democratic institutions and processes. Promotion of welfare and development is the surest way to consolidate peace and build mass support for democratic governance in post-conflict societies like Sierra Leone.

**Literature on Sierra Leone**


An overriding challenge for the South African government is to progress beyond the apartheid legacy and a myriad of enduring problems and weaknesses in higher education and to create a new landscape that meets economic and social development needs through the production of high quality graduates and knowledge and research.

Following on the heels of the report in July 2000 by the Council on Higher Education, the advisory body to the Minister of Education, a Ministerial National Working Group last month reaffirmed that the transformation of higher education was unavoidable, urgent and long overdue. Like the Council, the Working Group proposed major restructuring through mergers of institutions that would reduce the present 36 institutions to 21 and create a more equitable, differentiated, high quality, effective and sustainable institutional landscape.

The Minister will soon formulate his own proposals on restructuring, consult with the Council on Higher Education and take proposals to Cabinet. Any proposals for restructuring are bound to be strongly contested by different constituencies. Yet the stakes are high: whether or not the higher education system becomes a key engine driving and contributing to the reconstruction and development of South African society.

The imperative of change

The inherited higher education system was designed to reproduce, through teaching and research, white privilege and black subordination in all spheres of society. All institutions were in differing ways and to differing extents deeply implicated in this. Higher education was fragmented and divided along racial and ethnic lines, and reflected severe social inequalities of ‘race’ and gender with respect to student access and success and the composition of academic staff. There were also major institutional inequities between what are termed historically white institutions and historically black institutions. One key policy imperative and challenge therefore is to transform higher education so that it becomes more socially equitable internally and promotes social equity more generally.

Research and teaching were extensively shaped by the socio-economic and political priorities of the apartheid separate development programme. Instead, higher education is now called on to address and to become responsive to the development needs of a democratic South Africa. These needs are crystallised in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of 1994 as a fourfold commitment. First is “meeting basic needs of people”. Second is “developing our human resources”. Third is “building the economy”, and fourth is the task of “democratising the state and society”.

South Africa’s transition occurs in a context of globalisation and global economic growth is increasingly dependent on knowledge and information. Thus, a major challenge for higher education is to produce through research and teaching and learning programmes the knowledge and personpower that will enable South Africa to engage proactively with and participate in a highly competitive global economy.

However, a number of conditions within higher education represent fundamental challenges to the system and major obstacles to the achievement of key national and social goals.
These include:

1) The geographic location of institutions, which was based on ideological and political considerations rather than rational and coherent planning. This results in fragmentation and unnecessary duplication.

2) The continued and even increasing fragmentation of the system. The higher education system still does not function in the unified and co-ordinated way envisaged by the government’s White Paper on higher education. Neither existing planning instruments nor encouraging institutions has produced meaningful co-ordination or collaboration.

3) Competition among public institutions is rife, especially where traditional contact institutions have embarked on large-scale distance provision. This increase in distance provision has resulted, without any national planning, in the establishment of learning centres in various cities and towns.

4) Individualised initiatives of institutions, frequently with no or little reference to real socio-economic and educational needs and to the programme offerings of neighbouring institutions. The major dangers are: lack of institutional focus and mission incoherence; unwarranted duplication of activities and programmes; and destructive competition in which historically white institutions could reinforce their inherited privileges. National quality assurance mechanisms are in their infancy and this creates major concerns about the quality of teaching and learning.

5) Major inefficiencies related to student throughput rates, graduation rates, student drop-outs, student repetition and the retention of failing students. South African universities and technikons produced about 75,000 graduates and diplomates in 1998. Had there been reasonable throughput rates then at least 100,000 graduates/diplomates would have been produced in 1998. One sixth of students drop out of the system each year without completing their qualifications.

6) The skewed racial and gender distribution of students in the various levels and fields of study and at certain institutions.

   Gender equity improved in higher education enrolments between 1993 and 1999. Whereas in 1993, 43% of students were female, their proportion increased to 53% in 2000. This change, however, masks inequities in the distribution of female students across academic programmes as well as at higher levels of postgraduate training. Female students tend to be clustered in the humanities and, in particular, teacher education programmes. They remain seriously under-represented in programmes in science, engineering and technology and in business and management.

   Black, and in particular African, student enrolments also increased rapidly between 1993 and 2000. Compared to 40% in 1993, 60% of all students in universities and technikons in 2000 were African. Concomitantly, the representation of white students in the higher education system fell from 47% in 1993 to 28% in 2000. The rapid increase in African students, however, masks an inequity similar to that of female students. Large proportions of African students are enrolled in distance education programmes, most of which are humanities and teacher-upgrade programmes. The numbers and proportions of African students in programmes in science, engineering and technology and in business/management remain low. Post-graduate enrolments across most fields are also extremely low.

   The extremely poor ‘race’ and gender representation and distribution of academic and administrative staff. All institutions have academic staff and senior administrative bodies that are dominated by whites and males. The historically white institutions continue to have academic and senior administrative staff bodies that are dominated by whites.

   The extremely low research outputs of most institutions and the uneven levels of outputs, even in those institutions that evince a higher ratio of research outputs relative to other institutions. About 65% of all publications recognised for subsidy purposes are produced by only six of the present 36 institutions. These same six institutions also produce close to 70% of South Africa’s total masters and doctoral graduates.

   There are, however, also a number of immediate contextual problems of the system that include:

1) The decline in student enrolments within the public higher education sector. The
overall participation rate has remained static and is estimated for 2000 at 15% for the age group 20-24. This is low for a country striving to become competitive in the global knowledge-based economy.

2) The possible crippling effects on the ability of several institutions to continue to fund their activities because of the relationship between enrolments and funding as well as their inability to attract more diverse sources of funding.

3) The fragile governance capacity at many institutions and the persistence of crises at some of these. A complex of conditions has given rise to weak and/or inadequate governance and management. The problems at these institutions go well beyond episodic student protests and relate fundamentally to institutional leadership and effective management and administration.

The problems and weaknesses of the higher education system are extensive and varied:

• They are a serious drain on national resources and undermine government’s ability to achieve its national goals.

• They impact negatively on the possibilities for democratic consolidation through not realising social benefits of higher education for development of society as a whole.

• They mean that the achievement of equity and economic and social development is being compromised by inefficiencies, lack of effectiveness, and shortcomings in quality.

Recommendations

Urgently required are creative and constructive interventions that have as their overall goal a new higher education landscape that is characterised by equity, quality and excellence, responsiveness to social needs and effective and efficient provision and governance.

Key outcomes must be: first, in the face of the apartheid legacy and current fragmentation, the achievement of a rational, national, integrated and co-ordinated higher education system. Second, because the needs of South Africa are greatly varied, such a system must be a highly differentiated system in which institutions have diverse and distinct missions. There is no virtue in all institutions seeking to be the same and offering the same programmes.

Third, there must be significant improvements in participation in higher education with increasing equity. Real possibilities must be created for social advancement for those who were historically disadvantaged under apartheid—black and women South Africans, and especially learners of working class and rural poor social origins. Equity entails more than simply access to higher education. It must incorporate real opportunity—environments in which learners, through academic support, excellent teaching and mentoring and other initiatives, genuinely have every chance to graduate with the relevant knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes that are required for any occupation and profession and for productive citizenship.

Fourth, high quality and excellence must be the watchwords of all higher education institutions. If equity is not accompanied by quality, lip service is paid to equity and a distorted equity is promoted, which does not in any substantive and meaningful way erode the domination of high level occupations and intellectual production by particular social groups. Finally, higher education must deliver the knowledge and high level personpower that is crucial to South Africa’s success.

Far-reaching changes in higher education are long overdue and unavoidable. The government must mediate diverse interests and make difficult choices and tough decisions regarding a new landscape and spectrum of institutions. Without proactive, deliberate and decisive action on the part of government, there will be stagnation and/or a Darwinian resolution in which the new higher education landscape will be a far cry from the kind that is required in a developing democracy.

South Africa has a historic opportunity to reconfigure its higher education system in a principled and imaginative way, so that it is more suited to the needs of a democracy and of all its citizens in contrast to the irrational and exclusionary imperatives which shaped large parts of the current system. The opportunity must be grasped. It is vital to look to the future, to build truly South African institutions and put to them to work for and on behalf of all South Africans.
From the 'African Renaissance', a term coined in the late 1990s by South Africa’s President Thabo Mbeki, emerged the “Millennium African Renaissance Programme” (MAP). It involved, with the active South African, Nigerian, Algerian and Egyptian participation in its advocacy, the representatives of the most powerful economies on the African continent. The ‘Compact for African Recovery’ of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Omega Plan of Senegal’s President added to the substance of the document, adopted as the ‘New African Initiative’ at the OAU Summit in July 2001 in Lusaka. An Implementation Committee of Heads of State re-named a revised version during October 2001 in Abuja as ‘The New Partnership for Africa’s Development’ (NEPAD).

Critical observers question if this is once again old wine in new bottles. But the new quality of NEPAD as a blueprint for Africa’s future lies in the hitherto unprecedented claim by the political leaders for collective responsibility over policy issues. The notion of “good governance” is considered and explicitly recognised as a substantial ingredient of socio-economic development. The NEPAD document welcomes that “across the continent, democracy is spreading, backed by the African Union, which has shown a new resolve to deal with conflicts and censure deviation from the norm”. As it further states: “The New Partnership for Africa’s Development has, as one of its foundations, the expansion of democratic frontiers and the deepening of the culture of human rights”.

NEPAD’s strong emphasis on democracy and governance does indeed make it genuinely different from earlier initiatives to promote, propagate, and seek external support for African development within a continental perspective. Conflict prevention, democracy and governance are considered of primary importance.

This perception underpins NEPAD’s claim to speak for the people of Africa through democratically legitimised representatives. Legitimacy and credibility are among the keywords and essential contributing factors in the current efforts to turn NEPAD into a success story.

One should not lose sight of these substantial issues amidst the variety of pressing demands for socio-economic progress in terms of material delivery. As an observer from Cornell University recently warned: “There is a danger that in satisfying too many demands NEPAD will squander its most precious resource—its position as a regional institution that draws its regional and global legitimacy from its democratic roots and aspirations” (Ravi Kanbur, The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD): An Initial Commentary. The author is T.H. Lee Professor of World Affairs and Professor of Economics. The commentary was prepared for the Southern African Regional Poverty Network and is accessible through www.people.cornell.edu/pages/sk145).

As pointed out elsewhere in more detail (H. Melber, The New African Initiative and the African Union. A Preliminary Assessment and Documentation. Uppsala: the Nordic Africa Institute, 2001, Current African issues, no. 25. See also the forthcoming article in Forum for Development Studies, no. 1/2002.), the extent to which NEPAD will become the relevant framework for African emancipation at the beginning of the 21st century will depend on the degree of the political will and commitment within the ranks of the emerging African Union (AU). As in any other regional or global body bringing together state actors, the AU operates within the potentially conflicting—if not contradictory — parameters of the principle of national sovereignty and a commonly defined denominator of collective responsibility.

The AU Constitution confirms in Article 4(g) its adherence to the principle of non-intervention or non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. Article 4(h) in contrast
concedes the right to intervene pursuant to a decision of the AU Assembly in respect of grave circumstances. These are specified as war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. This is a far cry from the possible enhancement of the commitment to ‘good governance’ as postulated by NEPAD. The latter notion certainly requires essentials such as legitimacy, constitutionality and legality of a political system maintaining the rule of law. Between these requirements for ‘good governance’ and the basic failures spelled out in the AU Constitution as a prerequisite for intervention lie more than just nuances in deficiencies of political systems at present existing on the continent.

This suggests more than only a problem of definition, which often comes along in terms of decisions relevant for externally based conflict mediation. While the blueprint labelled NEPAD is currently requiring confidence-building measures, there are at least two obvious examples to illustrate the dilemma in the context of the Southern African region alone. The first was the general election for a new President that took place at the end of 2001 in Zambia. The role of election monitors (such as the SADC observer group) and the implications of their conclusions have not been clearly specified, nor agreed upon. Given this limbo, “good governance” can hardly have been supported in an ongoing conflict contesting election results. The second and even more basic case is the current crisis in Zimbabwe. The latter might be viewed as the real litmus test. If NEPAD’s reference to the principles of “good governance” is more than mere lip service, both SADC and the AU will have to demonstrate the degree of commitment towards the implementation of such a paradigm. Otherwise the credibility will be lost before it has been gained.

The challenge to reconcile conflicting postulates (national sovereignty versus collective responsibility) is of course not confined to Africa. It is tested and contested in the arena of changing international norms elsewhere too. Former Yugoslavia, the conflicts in Kosovo and more recently the actions following September 11 come to mind as some prominent examples. The European Union was in a much less critical case put to a serious test with the election results in Austria during late 1999. Subsequent EU internal reactions were evidence of the thin ice on which regional bodies operate when a generally assumed political consensus might be questioned even through the outcome of undoubtedly free and fair general and hence democratic elections. This illustrates also that while NEPAD is a regional document, it touches upon global issues of common concern and poses a challenge to collective responsibility within the framework of commonly defined values and norms.

To turn NEPAD into the success story it deserves to become, however, the challenge is not only with the African main actors, who rightly claim ownership over their development. It also is a duty on the part of other states in support of NEPAD outside of the continent to reduce and ultimately eliminate undue external interference such as the unabated exploitation of natural resources without adequate compensation (not only of parasitic elites but the majority of the people—which again, of course, relates to the issue of ‘good governance’ and involves Africans themselves). Along similar lines, arms deals and especially exports of weapons into conflict zones should be strictly prohibited and punished by both national and international laws. The same should apply to any corruption practice. The challenge to be met is to contribute from the outside towards sustainable development by offering the African partners a globally conducive environment to secure their fair share in the world economy and the international policy making processes.

In his statement at the public meeting on NEPAD with several ministers from African and the Nordic countries in Stockholm’s Old Parliament Building on 11 January 2002, the Foreign Minister from Botswana used ‘fairness’ as a keyword in this context. To turn this into an ‘African century’, as suggested at the same meeting by South Africa’s Foreign Minister, therefore requires due recognition of African interests by the powerful ones outside of the continent in both the political and economic spheres.

* This is the slightly revised version of a presentation to a public seminar on NEPAD, organised jointly by the Swedish Development Forum and the Nordic Africa Institute, with several African and Nordic foreign ministers at the Old Parliament Building, Stockholm, 11 January 2002.
The Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the African Regional System of Human Rights

By: Alpha Fall

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One of the important features of the African human rights system is the role played by the civil society in general and the human rights community in particular, ever since the inception of the African Commission. Human rights organizations played an important role in the adoption of the instruments of the regional system of human rights protection in Africa.

Today, NGOs and human rights activists still play a vital role in the work of the African Commission by providing information on violations by state parties of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. This information is essential to the African Commission when considering state reports submitted pursuant to article 62 of the African Charter and in monitoring states’ compliance with the Charter. Human rights organizations have filed numerous complaints against state parties that violate the rights of individuals and groups within their jurisdiction. During the sessions of the African Commission, human rights organizations and activists participate actively and enrich the proceedings through their complaints and interventions. The African Commission has granted observer status to many organizations working in the field of human rights and development in Africa and around the world. By so doing, the African Commission acknowledges the importance and vitality of the constructive dialogue with human rights organizations and activists.

At the national level human rights defenders make a considerable input to the democratization process of almost all African countries. They constitute the first line of rescue for victims of human rights violations. The sensitivity of human rights issues along with the type of activities in which human rights organizations and activists are involved at the national level put their lives and freedom at risk. Human rights activists face different types of risks, and are subject to constant violations of their human rights, including imprisonment (Djibouti), arbitrary arrest (Burkina Faso, Senegal), denial of right to work and interference in the activities of human rights organizations (Tunisia), extra-judicial executions (Chad) etc.

The important role of human rights activists in civil and political activities necessitates their protection through efficient mechanisms at the national and regional level. The African Commission’s mandate is to promote human and peoples’ rights and to ensure their protection on the continent (article 45). This mandate can be a valuable tool in the protection of human rights defenders. The critical question is how the Commission is able to exercise this mandate/protection in practice. There are many strategies and mechanisms that the African Commission can use to this effect. The African Commission can put on its agenda an item on human rights defenders; this can enable it to institute a broader and permanent discussion on the subject with state representatives and NGO members participating in the session. It is also possible for the Commission to enquire about this subject when state parties’ reports are considered. However, the usefulness of these strategies can be limited by the fact that states do not submit their reports regularly and the fact that the majority of the states do not attend the sessions of the African Commission.

In the past the African Commission, pursuant to article 46 of the African Charter, has appointed a Special Rapporteur to deal with similar issues. (The Commission has three Special Rapporteurs on extra-judicial executions, prison conditions and women.) It is thus possible, and hoped, that the Commission will move toward the appointment of a Special Rapporteur for human rights defenders. The NGOs participating in the work of the African Commission’s session in Bujumbura, Burundi, in 1999, raised the idea of the Commission appointing such a Special Rapporteur.
There are obviously many notable advantages in the mechanism of Special Rapporteur. The first is the possibility for the Commission to give the Special Rapporteur an extensive mandate ensuring that protection will be granted not only to human rights defenders per se but to a wider segment of civil society activists including workers’ union leaders, minority groups’ leaders and all individuals and groups of diverse professions and sectors which have the primary objective of defending, promoting and advocating human rights. The expertise of the Special Rapporteur is the second advantage. If an expert with a wide knowledge of the human rights community and problems in Africa is appointed, his or her work can enable the African Commission to adopt an efficient strategy toward the effective protection of human rights activists. Furthermore, the commitment of a Special Rapporteur will help to raise awareness at the state party level, on the cultural and social usefulness of human rights defenders’ activities, and will serve as an early warning mechanism that can limit the widespread violation of human rights that they are subject to.

Nevertheless, the experience of the African Commission with its Special Rapporteurs has proven that this mechanism could not in any case be a panacea for the protection of human rights in Africa. The appointment of Special Rapporteurs was positively acknowledged by the human rights community in Africa. However, the efficiency of the work of the Special Rapporteurs was tempered by many factors internal and external to the African Commission. Contrary to what is the practice with other human rights protection mechanisms (international and regional), the African Commission did not deem it necessary to appoint an independent expert to work and report to the Special Rapporteurs. All the Special Rapporteurs appointed are members of the African Commission who added to their promotional activities the mandate of Special Rapporteur. This has proven to be an additional burden on the Special Rapporteurs because like all the members of the African Commission, they are involved in professional activities, some as civil servants, in their respective countries. The fact of being civil servants, in addition to being members of the Commission and Special Rapporteurs, limited the time they were able to devote to the execution of their mandate.

In addition, the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs are drafted in a restrictive way that does not allow them to execute their mandate in an innovative way. More importantly, the African Commission’s budget, which is very limited, does not allow granting the Special Rapporteurs meaningful secretarial and financial assistance. The African Commission does not have the means either to recruit additional staff members to assist in the execution of the mandate of the Special Rapporteurs or to finance their trips in member states. For example, in his seven years in office, the Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial executions has not carried out any visit to state parties despite the large number of allegations of extra-judicial executions that have been brought to his attention. However, the co-operation of the African Commission with its financial partners and NGOs allowed the Special Rapporteur on Prison Conditions to make on-site visits in a number of countries and to publish and disseminate reports on the activities. Those visits produced commendable improvements in prison conditions in the countries visited.

The human rights community in Africa and around the world will, probably, warmly welcome the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders in Africa. However, to allow an efficient and meaningful protection mechanism, the African Commission should look critically into the work of the present Special Rapporteurs in order to correct the shortcomings affecting this important mechanism. In this regard the African Commission could develop a closer working relationship with National Human Rights Institutions where they exist by encouraging them to add to their activities the protection of human rights defenders.

The African regional human rights system is a rare example of collaboration and a close working relationship between civil society and the African Commission. In order to ensure the development of this relationship and to contribute to the strengthening of the nascent civil society in Africa, the African Commission is urged to appoint a Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders in Africa.
Development Research Evaluation: Can it be a good evaluation?

By: Henrik Secher Marcussen
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In the previous number of News from the Nordic Africa Institute (no. 1/2002), Johan Helland raised the question as to whether Nordic development research had painted itself into a corner and thereby risked becoming increasingly marginalized by being seen as the concern of the development agencies, rather than an issue in national research policy. Helland’s concern was fostered by his participation in recent evaluations of development research in both Norway and Denmark.

Before coming to Helland’s concern, which in the article was given a very enticing and appealing twist with the heading “Development Research: Can it be good research?”, and commenting on what makes “good development research” (which actually may not be as self-evident as implied in Helland’s contribution), I would like to dwell a little on one of the evaluations carried out, the Danish one which, as mentioned, was done with Helland’s participation. Because how can we expect good development research to surface, if the evaluation process behind and the recommendations offered do not lend themselves easily to “good” development research in Helland’s sense of the word?

Complicating matters further has been that the evaluation of Danish development research has been organized and implemented in such a way that the outcome has become totally unpredictable. As will be discussed below, the complicated and unclear structural organization of the evaluation has led one of the subjects of the evaluation, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to be left solely to interpret and assess the evaluation results. And this has resulted in the paradoxical situation that as of date—more than a year after the submission of evaluation reports—nothing has happened. It could be argued, and Helland would certainly consent to this, that the evaluation team has no responsibility whatsoever for shortcomings in the implementation process. On the other hand, it is rather surprising that a reputable institution such as the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) joined the Danish evaluation without questioning its obviously blurred and confused organizational structures.

Confused evaluation structures
The organization of the Danish development research evaluation is an illuminating example of how not to organize an evaluation process. The Danish evaluation was characterized by confusing structures, unclear responsibilities between different teams, changing focus, no coherent evaluation methodology and reporting of highly variable quality which, in cases, had built-in contradictions and which sent unclear signals.

The Danish Foreign Ministry was responsible for the evaluation design. The evaluation was organized through a Commission headed by Gudmund Hernes, previously Norwegian Minister of Health and Research, now Director of UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning, and with the assistance of five other members.

To assist the Commission, a research team from CMI was recruited to provide background documentation and analysis and, in addition, three specialist teams would prepare reports on health issues, on agriculture and natural resources research and on social science research. Furthermore, it was decided to commission a special paper on current thinking on research for development. In total, five reports were prepared, in addition to the main report (see list at the end of this article).

In the evaluation process, a great number of interviews took place. In cases with development researchers situated within areas falling between health, agriculture, natural resources and social sciences, interviews were conducted with the same persons by each specialist team, in addition to interviews conducted by indi-
vidual members of the Commission, and/or by the CMI team. Trying to calculate how much time had gone into the various interview sessions, Danish development researchers reported that meetings and preparation for meetings often totalled a complete week’s workload. In my own case, the time devoted to the exercise went well beyond that, as also illustrated by the fact that I met the same team three times, discussing, however, three different thematic issues. But fortunately for the evaluation, this was not to be considered as a major concern, as this working time was borne by universities or other public institutions.

The confused nature of the organization of the evaluation left an image of unclear objectives and focusing, and a reporting where it was also unclear how each team would feed into the Commission and, ultimately, the conclusions and recommendations offered by the Commission chairman. But most importantly it left a stack of reports, which were not easy to consolidate as they each pointed in their own direction. And the report prepared by the Commission wisely chose not to go into many details, but devoted itself to the broader issues—the new vision for Danish development research—avoiding some of the harsher expressions surfacing in other reports.

The implication of the complicated evaluation process together with the rather vague “visionary” outcome, as illustrated by the main evaluation report, has been that it has not only been left entirely to the Ministry itself to interpret evaluation results and suggest implementation measures, but the many, often conflicting, points made in the various reports have also left a totally open field, or space, for the Ministry to fill as it pleased.

And after several months with internal Ministry working groups looking into the evaluation material, we are still in the dark as to what development research infrastructure to anticipate in the future. The Ministry has not yet decided upon anything, despite announcing that measures would be taken, first before the summer vacation 2001, then shortly after. And with the shift in government following our election in November 2001, everything is now more in the dark than ever. Now a completely new agenda is being introduced, where Danish development assistance is broadly up for a major revision and ideological reformulation, which does not contribute much to optimism (but that is another story).

**Danish research community’s reaction**

While the evaluation process has been met with much shaking of heads, generally the reporting has not been entirely unfavourably received by the research community, as the need for reforms of current practices has been widely recognized. This was, for instance, illustrated at a meeting held at the Council for International Development Co-operation on 15 May 2001, where evaluation results were presented by the Commission, with an introduction by Gudmund Hernes, and where members of the Danish research community were present.

Among the well received points in the main report is the argued need, at last, to foster a new understanding between research and practice, or between development researcher and practitioner. A relationship which in the past in Denmark has been marred by so many hidden (or open) antagonisms, which have not only hampered impact but also resulted in a significant waste of resources—on both sides. With the Hernes report, it is finally established as truth that being in the development business means constantly building on knowledge creation and knowledge transfers. For development assistance to thrive continuously with quality, a systematic investment in development research and knowledge creation is deemed necessary. Development research is needed—and should be strengthened, the reports say, which in Denmark is surely a new message being sent.

This requires that Danida should be assessing its organizational structures, allowing for knowledge and research results to feed into the administrative system more easily and effectively, and that a coherent institutional policy be formulated in this regard. For the development research community, a new and more open attitude towards the needs of the aid sector is needed.

Other well received recommendations in the Hernes report are: the need for development researchers from the developing world to more actively enter the development research scene in a structured partnership with Danish development researchers; the need for estab-
lishing multidisciplinary research work on global development problems; the need to strengthen certain research areas; the clarification of the roles of basic and applied research; the restructuring of financing structures and the relative weight between partners now receiving development research funding etc.

However, some criticism has also naturally been raised which brings me back to Helland’s article in News no. 1/2002.

**The quest for good development research—and for good evaluations**

Certainly, I share with Helland his wish to see “good development research” flourish—whatever the meaning of “good” may be. Helland is here referring to a number of different definitions of what development research actually is, but in the evaluation reports there is no doubt in this regard. Development research is aimed at improving the quality of development assistance provided!

This seems to be a rather superficial definition that tends not to see development research in a holistic context (although that is what is stated as intended in the main report). It is quite clear that the terms of reference for the evaluation indicated that the aim was for the evaluation team to assist the Ministry in providing more value for money, in terms of directly useful and implementable information. But the evaluation tends to overlook that development research cannot be confined to such instrumental or utilitarian knowledge creation (as also seems to be recognized by Helland, arguing against the approach of the evaluation, in emphasizing the value of conducting development research outside this narrow framework). Often some of the best policy related research, feeding into decision makers, has a significant amount of basic and theoretically oriented research being conducted prior or similar to it. In other words, relevant policy oriented and direct aid research cannot exist, with quality, without basic, theoretical research as well.

Helland refers to his quality theme by mentioning a couple of times that development research has “gained a reputation of being second-rate research, struggling hard to maintain quality or to be relevant”. He may be right in that, who knows? But the evaluation does not communicate this message in its main report, where it is stated that “Much of this research is very good; some of it is excellent. For a small country, Denmark has notably good research capacity in the development field”. Yet there is, naturally, room for improvement.

Helland’s main criticism is, as mentioned, that development research “has been relegated from the research systems proper to a precarious existence in the respective ministries of foreign affairs”. This argument is also carried forward to the main report, which insists that Danida is “the principal funder of development research” in Denmark. Helland seems to endorse this view, on which he builds his main argument of development research having confined itself to the aid funding structures.

But is it true? Helland mentions that “universities provide their staff with research time to actually engage in research”. And then he adds: “While this contribution no doubt is significant, it is difficult to express in financial terms.”! Yes, indeed. But in order to provide some substance to the argument, how nice it would have been if the evaluation had taken the time and energy to try to calculate contributions by universities to development research. This did not happen for lack of resources, one could add.

**The reports of the evaluation described in the article**

Sørbø, Gunnar and Johan Helland: *Danida and Danish Development Research: Towards a new partnership*

Blackie, Malcolm, Piers Blaikie and Michael Stocking: *Review of Danida Funded Research in Agriculture and Natural Resources*

Salih, M.A. Mohamed and Caroline Thomas: *Review of Danida Funded Research in the Social Sciences*

Solberg, Claus Ola and Peter Streifland: *Review of Danida Funded Research in the Health Sciences*

Arnold, Erik and Martin Bell: *Some New Ideas about Research for Development*

The main evaluation report, containing conclusions and recommendations, is entitled *Partnership at the Leading Edge: A Danish Vision for Knowledge, Research and Development.*
Interview with Mary E. Modupe Kolawole

Mary E. Modupe Kolawole (Nigeria) holds a PhD in African literature from University of Ife in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Mary Kolawole has been a Rockefeller Fellow in African Cultural and Gender Studies at Cornell University, a Commonwealth Visiting Fellow at the University of Kent, a Research Associate at the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town, and a guest researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute. She is currently an Associate Professor in Literature and Women’s Studies at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Mary Kolawole is a founder member of the Network for Women’s Studies in Nigeria, and the author of several books, among others ‘Womanism and African Consciousness’, published in 1997 by Africa World Press. In this book, through an in-depth historical critique of indigenous oral and written genres by and about women, Mary Kolawole challenges the accepted notion that African women are voiceless members of society. Much of Mary Kolawole’s research deals with this issue: to identify, to communicate and to analyse the voices of African women, expressed through oral and written literature, as well as through proverbs, songs and poems. To her being a scholar of literature becomes a vantage point for waging a relentless struggle regarding the cultural and political audibility of African women. In another book ‘Gender Perceptions and Development in Africa’, published in 1998 by Arrabon Academic Publishers, Mary Kolawole has edited contributions by herself and ten fellow Nigerian, Ghanaian, Zimbabwean and South African scholars of literature, with a critical focus on gender myths and images in African oral and written literature.

Signe Arnfred (SA): I should like to hear a little about your background. How did you enter academia?

I'm the first born of a family of twelve children out of which nine are female. When I was going to start secondary school, my father's business was in a very bad shape and so his friends went to him and asked him: Are you going to send a girl to school when your finances are not OK? But my father's reply touched me and challenged me, he said: “She is my first-born, she is very intelligent and hard working. If I don't send her to school, and wait to send the boys to school, how am I sure that the boys are diligent and hard working?” That was in 1962, and it kept ringing in my ears that I must not let him down. I must prove that a girl can be just as useful in society as a boy. That has been my principle. Unfortunately my father died during my last year in high school, and I have always wished he was alive now to see how justified his philosophy was.

SA: But what made you take up women’s issues?

The last point I made, about not sending girls to school, is actually a moving factor. I wanted to prove that my father was right in sending me to school. Besides, my maternal grandmother was a very strong woman whom many men respected. She was really my role model. I thought that as a woman, I wanted to change my society in a positive way.

SA: There is a strong history of women’s struggle in Nigeria. Did you know anything about this before you went to university?
Yes, I know there have been occasions where women mobilised themselves to face oppression, to fight against what they considered to be injustices. Particularly in my area of Nigeria, in Yorubaland, the women’s wars as they were called were something that the men hated, because the king would lose his throne if he dared to challenge the women. He would either go into exile or he would no longer be considered as a successful king. The women were not very visible in the public sphere, in the political sphere as we had male kings and male rulers — as you know, the elites were mostly men. But in subtle ways, the women’s voices had to be heard and if a king or a ruler in the traditional set-up refused to listen to the women’s voices, the women would show their anger. In my part of Nigeria, one way of showing it was to go naked, as a group of women, to march to the palace. The king would not be able to face them and he would have to resign. So, in a kind of paradoxical way, women’s opinions mattered a lot. So, in my own part of Nigeria, I have always heard stories about strong women and when I grew up, I saw very strong women like my grandmother, and I was always impressed by these women who could not be put down, who would not allow themselves to be pushed around by anybody. My grandmother was an opinion-maker, and there were a few other women like her, and that really touched me and motivated me into action.

SA: What about women’s movements, in more recent years, in Nigeria?

At the point when I took up women’s studies, it was more of an academic matter. It was only the beginning of what we now know as the modern women’s movement in Nigeria. 25 years ago, what we had were traditional women’s associations, market women’s groups, and they were strong forces in their own way, too. But they only had an impact on specific, limited spheres, not on a global or national level. There were lots of these women’s groups who tried to present their cases collectively and got results. But in the last 15 years, many women in academia started through inspiration from Western women to make women’s issues a more properly planned and focused movement. At the same time, our government started responding to United Nations’ suggestions and platforms of actions and recommendations, especially before and after the Beijing convention. In fact, the UN’s decade for women was a big opportunity, because that was when women’s studies and gender issues became a prominent thing and for the first time a lot of policy-makers became aware of the gender gaps.

SA: I would also like to hear about the organisation of women’s studies in academia, because I know you participated in that. From where did the initiative come to start the Women’s Studies Network?

I am privileged because I belong to some of the foundation networks for gender studies in Nigeria. My university—Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife—is actually the oldest in women’s studies. About 25 years ago, the department of sociology had a women’s studies unit, which organised seminars. But there was a lot of resistance from the men, from the authorities of the university, they did not see the need to focus on these issues. During the last ten years, however, that centre has grown and has become a separate centre for gender and socio-political studies. At the national level in Nigeria there were national fora also for women’s groups to meet together. Some of the donor agencies, such as Sida, the British Council and USAID, actually helped in providing—not only funding, but motivation and infrastructure—for a more serious women’s studies network.

About five years ago the British Council funded the most seriously-minded network, called Network for Women’s Studies in Nigeria. This has brought together many women who are interested in gender, from the universities, from the NGOs and even from government institutions. By the time this network started, half of the universities in Nigeria did not have anything you could call a definite Women’s Studies programme, although there were individual women who were interested in gender. In the last five years, however, there has been a big explosion in the establishing of women’s studies groups, units and centres in most Nigerian universities. I think similar
stories could be told in other countries in Africa.

SA: The work at the university centres for Women’s Studies, does it go smoothly nowadays?

It doesn’t go smoothly. One problem of the work at such centres is that sometimes it’s exclusive. Sometimes it tends to exclude particularly the younger generation of scholars, and that’s what I am not happy about, because I think that the younger generation of scholars, who are interested in gender and women’s studies, must be encouraged and taken on board. The tendéncy with some of the centres is that a few people, who started the centre, get to do everything. And that’s one of the problems of the centres — a lot of people who are doing research on gender are not involved at the centre levels.

SA: That is not because of the university structure, that is more hierarchies among the women?

Exactly, I must confirm there is a hierarchy. Sometimes there is mutual suspicion about who belongs to such a centre and who doesn’t belong to such a centre, because at the end of the day the centres are not controlled by the universities, they are controlled by individuals.

SA: But do they get money from the universities?

In my university, the centre does not get money from the university. The money comes from donors and from consultancy work.

SA: I know that you insist on making a distinction between ‘womanism’ and ‘feminism’. Could you explain that?

Yes, the distinction between womanism and feminism is not my personal distinction, although I do share the view. Alice Walker and Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi were actually the first black women who made this distinction. It’s a matter of naming, really. I don’t believe that womanism is a completely different concept that has nothing to do with feminism. It has a lot to do with feminism, the objectives, even the approaches and the methodologies are very similar. But in addition to what one might consider to be the characteristics of feminism in general, the womanism tries to focus more on specific needs that bring on board African cultural realities. Some radical feminism is not easily acceptable to a majority of African women, and this is what they are reacting against. So if you have a gender concept that emphasises the bonds of the family, the importance of being a mother, it doesn’t necessarily alienate men. Because as long as we alienate men — most of the policy-makers are men — we don’t move forward, we don’t get their support. Many men and women still feel that feminism is a threat to their cultural belief. Some women even believe that their husbands will begin to fight with them if they identify with feminism, but they don’t feel the same way with womanism. It’s a way of moving forward, of getting going with gender in Africa without diverting attention about whether feminism is relevant or not. So, I don’t think a name should become an obstacle, and that’s what it’s all about.

Still from my own experience I have felt the differences between the implications of being a woman in Nigeria and in Europe. During my first visit to Britain in 1972, when I came as a graduate student, I came with enthusiasm. I was going to work, because most women in my own society worked. But I came to see that most of the middle-class women that were my friends didn’t work, because they had to stay at home to take care of the children. So it became an embarrassment, it was something different. In Nigeria in 1972 people would think I was crazy if I did not work after having a good first degree. So you could see that difference. I came to Britain thinking that British women were all emancipated and they had freedom and everything, and I thought that working is an aspect of the freedom. But then I saw that a lot of women couldn’t work because they had to be mothers. Motherhood or being a wife did not stop people from working in my society, because of the cultural factors, the extended family. I saw the benefits for the first time. Because my mother or my mother-in-law or my sister would take care of the children, or I could even hire a house-help to take care of the children. Thus I could go to work after six weeks’ maternity leave, and things worked out smoothly. That experience was for me, a deep revelation of cultural diversities and the need to relativise and contextualise gender conceptualisation. It validates the issues central to womanism.
On 21–24 February the Sexuality, Gender and Society in Africa research programme hosted a workshop at the Nordic Africa Institute entitled Contexts of Gender in Africa. 18 people participated, ten from Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Mali) and eight from the Nordic countries (Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland), 16 women and two men. A whole range of professional backgrounds was represented: social anthropology, sociology, psychology, literature, linguistics, political science, demography and others. In spite of this diversity—a diversity also reflected in the papers—the group managed to maintain two and a half days of intense and challenging discussions. I like to think that this achievement was at least partly due to the long and laborious process of preparation.

The process of preparation for this workshop started almost a year ago, when I as a newly initiated research programme co-ordinator in April–May 2001 undertook a contact trip to centres of Gender Studies in West and Southern Africa. During this trip I met most of the African researchers to whom the call for papers for the February workshop was later circulated. Nordic network contacts received a similar call with the deadline for submission of abstracts in September 2001.

I wanted to make this first programme workshop (and subsequent publication) a conceptual one, focused on reflections on conceptualizations and methods of research in the fields of gender and sexuality. As stated in the Sexuality, Gender and Society in Africa programme folder, “so much previous and present research on African social relations carries a male and/or Western bias, presuming a male subject, and/or taking its point of departure in Western rather than African experience and realities. Critical investigation of available conceptualizations will be an ongoing activity [of the programme] along with development of new alternative approaches” (the full programme folder text is available on the Institute’s website: www.nai.uu.se). The workshop was the first major programme event along this line. All contributions were to be based in empirical studies, in order to show how concepts work or do not work in particular fields of empirical investigation.

Among more than 30 abstracts 18 were selected. Draft papers were submitted by 15 January 2002, and each author/workshop participant was given the task to critically read and comment in writing on two other papers. I myself commented on all the papers. In this way each author received prior to the workshop three sets of written comments. For the workshop presentations authors were requested to take these comments into consideration and as far as possible to present their future, revised papers.

Thinking sexualities

The call for papers had a section focused on conceptualizations of gender, and another one on thinking sexualities, but as it turned out the majority of papers dealt with issues of sexuality/sexualities in various forms. Some drew attention to the ways in which European conceptualizations of ‘woman as Other’ and femininity as polarized in Madonna/whore-imaginations had influenced colonial perceptions of black (non-white) women as icons of sexuality and bearers of lust and death—and how such imaginations are active even today,
lurking behind contemporary conceptions of ‘African sexuality’ in some HIV/AIDS related research. Other papers discussed aspects of sexuality not often dwelt upon by researchers, such as the activities of nuptial advisers in certain West African communities, whose task it is to teach young brides how to enhance erotic attraction, and to promote and sustain good and enjoyable sex in married couples. Still others dealt with the ways in which young men and women nowadays perceive male/female sexuality and how they verbalize their own sexual experiences and desires. While some papers focused mainly on female sexuality, others also discussed male sexual identities and concerns. Regarding issues of methodology one paper showed how concepts and methods applied in development work, for instance in so-called KAP surveys on contraceptive use (KAP=Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices) miss their target by being too general and superficial, and how more in-depth investigations may give very different results. Other papers discussed the shortcomings and implicit assumptions of much used Gender-and-Development terminologies and lines of thinking.

In terms of gender and sexuality research the workshop tried—successfully I think—to take nothing for granted. The notion of male supremacy and female subordination, which is often taken as a point of departure, was here an issue to be investigated. In line with contemporary African feminist research such implicit assumptions were questioned, and it was suggested that African gendered realities—especially as seen in a historical light—are open for different interpretations.

Diversities of conceptual and political locations
The overriding aim of the workshop discussions was to give constructive input and inspiration for re-writing of papers for publication in the first volume of a future series of publications from the Sexuality, Gender and Society in Africa research programme. Also with this in mind the last session of the workshop was devoted to a general discussion of issues and themes, which had surfaced during the previous sessions, and were felt of importance for the processes of re-writing.

Topics of this discussion were, among others, the following:

Conceptual awareness. Concepts such as ‘sexuality’ and ‘culture’ are frequently used in blurred and general ways. In the workshop efforts were made to provide tools for clarification, such as: What do we mean when we talk about ‘sexuality’? Are we referring to specific sexual practices, to sexual identities, or to ideas about or constructions of sexuality? Does it make sense at all to talk about ‘African sexuality’? And if so, what kind of sense? Whose ideas or representations of ‘African sexuality’ are we talking about? And regarding ‘culture’: When we use the concept ‘culture’, what are we referring to—cultural practices, cultural identities, traditions, anything else? What are we implying when we refer to ‘African culture’, ‘Zulu culture’, ‘Western culture’ etc? Ideas of unitary and coherent ‘cultures’ were questioned by arguments pointing to the fact that representations of any specific ‘culture’ reflect power relations and political struggles, in particular, gendered and generational ones.

Gender or feminism? This question was put by one workshop participant: Is ‘gender’ to ‘feminism’ as academia is to politics? What is at issue here is one aspect of the diversity among workshop participants, among whom some see their work in a context of feminist struggle—at whatever level of abstraction—while others conceive of themselves as social analysts with no particular political agenda. In this context it was also noted that neither ‘gender’ nor ‘feminism’ are clear or unified entities. There are several ways in which to use ‘gender’ as an analytical and/or political concept, and in recent years the widespread gender discourse of ‘Gender-and-Development’ and of ‘gender mainstreaming’ has added considerably to the confusion regarding the meaning of this term. ‘Feminisms’ too are manifold—as was also evidenced in the workshop, where arguments in favour of the term ‘womanism’ were introduced (regarding this discussion see the interview with Mary Kolawole—also a workshop participant—in this issue of News). While ‘gender or feminism’ was a dividing line among workshop participants, it was also argued that any analysis has political implications, whether these are explicit or not.
Locating ourselves in the papers. In every case it should be clear where we are writing from, and whom we are addressing. In the discussion around this issue it was made very clear that ‘location’ in this respect does not refer to geographical location as much as to conceptual and political location: In which kinds of contexts are each of us writing, and which community of scholars/advocates/practitioners are we addressing? What are our aims and interests as researchers? Included in ‘conceptual contexts’ are also our disciplinary trainings, the availability of academic resources (literature, libraries, research funding) and the contexts of discussion in our home institutions and research groups, as well as the character of women’s/men’s movements and struggles in our environment. An important aspect of this locating exercise is to look at our location in historical terms, and in terms of power.

With this discussion the workshop came full circle to the issue of diversity, which I pointed out at the beginning of this report, and which was also noted in the opening of the workshop. Such diversity in terms of conceptual and political locations, and in terms of power, is an issue which has to be dealt with in any workshop of any programme of the Nordic Africa Institute. While attempting—on a very limited scale—to counteract the unequal power aspects of this diversity, the *Sexuality, Gender and Society in Africa* programme is also trying to see it as an asset, exploring the possibilities provided by the double position in which most Africa-based scholars find themselves: on the one hand through university education having access to theories and methodologies of social science research; on the other hand through knowledge of the spoken language and through lived experience having access to a world of knowledge beyond the immediate grasp of people from outside. Gender researchers applying this double resource have produced/are producing exciting contributions to knowledge of gender in Africa, as well as to feminist theory.
Globalisation reshapes spatial, social and political orders and imposes new conditions for development. Among the trends identified as global, is the spatial process of urbanisation, which is interlinked with social processes of adaptation to urban life. There are new conditions for the civil society, for organisations working with or challenging state politics. Social orders are reshaped in processes of inclusion and exclusion. There are changes in gender relations at all levels of societies, specifically in the basic organisation, in family structures. The individualisation of women is identified as a global trend.

Urbanisation in Southern Africa is late but rapid. Half the population in Zambia and South Africa will soon live in towns, and the other countries will follow suit. Africa and African cities struggle against exclusion from global and regional networks and markets. Regardless of their degree of success or failure, poverty and deprivation will remain for a foreseeable future. Most new households do not find a decent place to live. Shelter and sanitation are unhealthy; water and fuel are precious and often expensive necessities. Women and men struggle to establish a new gender order in the urban areas. The GRUPHEL programme has focused on these changes of the gender relations.

In its aim to enhance research capacity in Southern Africa it has also responded to a third of the major changes in the global society: the turn towards knowledge-based societies, where research capacity is a productive factor and a precondition for development. Universities are poor in Southern Africa. Too seldom are the many good local researchers given space to formulate their own research agenda. In GRUPHEL the local researchers formulated the research agenda and the research questions within the broad theme.

The programme
On the initiative of SAREC, the funder of my research on how women in Lusaka and Harare were handling their housing situation, I consolidated my network of researchers in Southern Africa so that it could, as a network, apply for funds from SAREC’s ‘women’s programme’. Funds for the first three-year phase were available from 1992. Administration and co-ordination were decentralised but overall responsibility remained in Sweden until the third phase when the programme was fully Africanised and based at the Institute of Southern African Studies (ISAS) at the University of Lesotho.

Each phase has had between twelve and eighteen participants, altogether almost fifty African researchers from a wide range of disciplines have participated. I came to the Nordic Africa Institute in 1994, and brought with me my part-time involvement in the programme as scientific adviser and participant researcher. The institute has been a supportive environment. Within the framework of the institute, a seminar was arranged in Lund with participants from the Nordic countries from the GRUPHEL programme and from the sister programme, GUE, the Gender, Urbanisation and Environment programme in East Africa. The Nordic Africa Institute also pub-
lished an edited volume from that meeting (Schlyter 1996).

The first book resulting from the programme was published in Zimbabwe, the second by ISAS in Lesotho. ISAS is also working with the forthcoming volume from the third phase. The third phase is now at its end and the programme is under evaluation. ISAS submitted an application last year for a fourth phase, this time on the specific theme of “Generations in the city”.

**Access and gender neutrality**

Many of the GRUPHEL researchers have approached the question of gendered access to and control over resources. They have looked into the obstacles women meet when trying to get access to a house, a home. Most, but not all, GRUPHEL studies focus on low-income groups. In all income groups, the home is central in women’s strategies for a decent life and for security.

All the studies support one conclusion: gender-neutral policies, programmes and procedures discriminate against women. The mechanisms of this exclusion vary, but they are usually very strong. Not even the most committed staff in a housing project in South Africa managed in the end to make the project benefit women, not even one woman.

**Ownership rights**

The dual or multiple legal systems have many complicated gender implications. African gender researchers put research on legal issues high on the agenda. According to customary law, which is seen as developed during colonial times in negotiations between the male leaders of both the colonised and the colonisers, women are perpetual dependants, not eligible to own property or sign contracts. In several countries, not all, there have been legal reforms in favour of women’s rights, but administrative practices do not always follow them.

The GRUPHEL studies go beyond the simple dichotomising between customary and modern law. They show that low-income and uneducated women have often been skillful in navigating between the legal systems. Often they use customary claims tied to their motherhood in order to get access to property and to secure a safe place to live. But the studies also show a strong demand among urban women to get legal support for their right to own and inherit property.

**Privatisation**

As part of the adjustment towards more market oriented economies, council and government owned houses have been privatised. Historically, Africans were not allowed to own property in urban areas, and therefore a large part of the formal market stock was publicly owned houses. Urban housing has been tied to formal employment and the so-called “married quarters” were only for married couples. Thus, in the old rental contract both the employed husband and his wife were named.

With privatisation, whether it was a slow process in rent-to-buy schemes or a rapid and drastic transfer of property to a “sitting tenant”, only the husband’s name appears in the property deed. The public property was transferred to the male part of the population only!

Privatisation created a housing market, as many poor new owners could not resist the offers. Among these new middle-class buyers there were many women. Women put a high priority on housing and strategise their livelihood around the house. They benefited from the free market. But for the majority of women in marriage, privatisation meant that their position in relation to their husband was weakened. The privatisation reform was a strategic loss for women and for gender equality.

**Violence and the concept of privacy**

‘Home’ is a concept connected to ideas of privacy, rest, security and happiness, but for an abused woman it is a very insecure place. The definition of the home as a private realm leaves an abused wife unprotected by friends, neighbours and the law. The conceptualisation of private and public has a negative effect on attempts to curb domestic violence.

Not so very long ago, even killing was seen as a private matter. One of the GRUPHEL studies reviews a court case: the accused argued that he should not be arrested for murder. His killed wife’s family had agreed that “such things occur”, and he had paid the compensation they demanded. According to him it was a private
matter that was already settled. The court did not accept this view, but if the violence is not fatal, wife beating is seen as a private matter by the police stations and in local courts.

This view, and women’s weak rights in relation to their home, makes it difficult for women to leave violent husbands. They have nowhere else to go and no prospects of getting a part of the matrimonial home in the case of divorce.

Alternative to patriarchal marriage?
The number of women-headed households is high and, in fact, many women choose not to marry or re-marry. There may be many explanations, and I am not saying that this is the only, or even the dominant one, but I find it interesting that in several GRUPHEL studies, women explicitly express fear of losing control over their property. The marriage contract strengthens the husband’s power.

Unmarried women and men in partnership seem to have more space for negotiating their relationship. This is illustrated in a study among workers in a shantytown at a dam construction site in Lesotho. One study exposed how powerful women beerbrewers in control of production and property set the rules for their male helpers and lovers.

International silence on property rights
There is a silence in the development discourse about the power that lies in ownership. Em-
Since the time I worked as a professor at the University of Dar es Salaam (1987–92) and participated in student teaching supervision in secondary schools around the country, the language of instruction in African schools generally, and in Tanzanian secondary schools and institutions of higher learning especially, has continued to puzzle me and called on my research interest. I experienced first hand by sitting for more than a hundred hours in the back of secondary school classrooms the great problems teachers and students had communicating. The reason was that they were supposed to communicate in a language that was foreign to both parties and were not allowed to use a language with which they were all more familiar. Since I learnt to speak Kiswahili myself I experienced how much easier it was to communicate with and even tutor (though this was not allowed) my students in Kiswahili.

There is general agreement that children learn better when they understand what the teacher is saying—something that is taken for granted in the Nordic countries. This is, however, not the situation for most children in Africa who are taught in languages they do not use outside of the formal school situation and that function as effective barriers to the knowledge teachers want to convey.

While working at the University of Dar es Salaam I met colleagues who shared my interest in the language of instruction in Tanzanian secondary and higher education. These colleagues also sharpened my critical perspectives on the effects of donor interventions and conditionalities on the schooling prospects for the poor masses of African children and youth. The effects of these interventions have to do with privatisation, liberalisation of the text-book sector, reduction of the functions and in some cases the total closing down of the curriculum centers, cutting down of government expenditures, so-called cost-sharing and strengthening of the colonial languages. In the fall of 1994 one of these colleagues, Prof. Sumra, spent three months at my institute in Norway under NUFU funding (NUFU handles the Norwegian university co-operation between universities in developing countries and universities in Norway through funds from the development aid budget). We started discussing a collaborative research project that would benefit the masses of Tanzanian schoolchildren.

In 1995 I was asked by the National Institute of Education in Namibia to make an assessment of the situation of the African languages in Namibia after independence. Five years later the study was followed up by my student Halla Holmarsdottir as her Master’s thesis. We both found that the situation for the African languages as media of education had worsened since the apartheid period and was even worse in 2000 than in 1995 (Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, *International Review of Education* no. 3–4, 2001, pp. 293–322).

From 1996 until 1998 I was engaged in a research capacity building project at the historically black universities in South Africa, partly sponsored by the German Development Foundation. This assignment developed in me a keen interest in the schooling situation of the majority population of South Africa. One of the participants in this project,
Sibongile Ramalimetya Thandiwe Koloti, who was a lecturer at the University of Zululand, taught me a lot about the Zulu language and also about the difficulties learners face when the instruction is given in English rather than in Zulu.

After discussion with Tanzanian colleagues in 1999 I applied for planning money from my University to be able to plan a NUFU research project together with my former colleagues in Dar. I had at this point met Prof. Harold Herman from the University of the Western Cape on several occasions and he had mentioned the interest of some of his colleagues in working on the language in education situation in South Africa. NUFU had announced that they would encourage applicants to apply for South–South–North co-operation rather than just South–North co-operation. We received planning money and a group of researchers from the University of Dar es Salaam and the University of the Western Cape met with a delegation from my Institute in Bagamoyo, Tanzania in January 2000. Together we planned a research and staff development project for the years 2001–2005. When the Norwegian delegation returned to Norway we were, however, informed that all the NUFU money had been frozen and no new projects would start in 2001.

The project we had defined together in Bagamoyo contained two research components and a staff development component. The first research component was a description and analysis of the current language policies, their background, the forces working for and against change, and the manner in which teachers cope in the class-rooms in the secondary schools in Tanzania and the last part of primary school in South Africa. The second research component involved an action component where we planned an experiment where we would let some Form I and Form II classes in secondary school in Tanzania and fourth, fifth and sixth grade classes in primary school in South Africa be taught in their mother tongue or at least in a language that is familiar to them (isiXhosa in the Western Cape region of South Africa) in some subjects for two more years. This experiment would necessitate the consent of ministries, school inspectors, headmasters, teachers, parents and pupils. It would also require the production of textbooks and teaching material.

While waiting for a new opportunity to apply for NUFU funding I applied for a four year research project from the Norwegian Research Council (NFR) concentrating on the first of the two research components. At the end of 2000 this application was granted for the following four years (2001–2004) and I could employ a research assistant for the first three years. I employed Halla Holmarsdottir, and together with her and the economic adviser of our Institute, Erik Vollen, I made a trip to South Africa and Tanzania in January 2001 to discuss the NFR project and do some final planning of the new NUFU application. Halla and I decided that the division of labor between us would be her concentrating on South Africa, me on Tanzania. Halla is right now (February 2002) in South Africa doing her fieldwork.

I am using my six weeks stay at the Nordic Africa Institute to systematise documentation collected and interviews conducted through two field-trips during 2001 with policy-makers and educators in Tanzania about the language in the education situation. My six weeks have been interrupted by a one week trip to South Africa where I followed up on the work of my assistant and had a planning meeting in the NUFU project with my Tanzanian and South African partners. We have named our project the LOITASA (Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa) project. At our first meeting we produced a revised project document, a revised budget and started discussing a draft for a Plan of Operation. That document as well as the other two will be finalised at our launch conference in Tanzania at the end of April this year. I hope to come back to the Nordic Africa Institute to be able to summarise the NFR project at the end of 2004 and/or the NUFU project at the end of 2006. The Nordic Africa Institute is an inspiring environment to work in.
The Struggle is Over
Report from a research project

In mid-2001, the Nordic Africa Institute research project ‘National Liberation in Southern Africa: The Role of the Nordic Countries’ came to a conclusion. The final volume from the Swedish part of the project has just been published. For more details about the project an interview follows with the project co-ordinator Tor Sellström and research assistant Charlotta Dohlvik.

Karin Andersson Schiebe (KAS): How did the project start—who took the initiative and how was it financed?
Tor Sellström (TS): In 1992, Dr. Ibbo Mandaza at the Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies (SARIPS) took the initiative to documenting the history of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. I was then working in Namibia and was drawn into this initiative on the Namibian side. Shortly thereafter, Jan Cedergren, then at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), proposed that the Nordic countries should document their support to the liberation struggles. In 1994, I was asked to set up and co-ordinate such a project at the Nordic Africa Institute.

The objective was to document and analyse the history of the involvement of the Nordic countries in the liberation struggles in Southern Africa, more precisely the cooperation with the liberation movements. The reason why this had not been done before is that this part of the Nordic countries’ foreign policy was treated confidentially. But I and my colleagues in the other Nordic countries were given access to this documentation.

The project was financed by the Nordic Africa Institute through its Nordic core funding, but with additional funding for the national studies that were carried out, as well as for additional initiatives such as the conference held on Robben Island in 1999.

I approached people in the other Nordic countries (except Iceland, which did not take part in the project due to its marginal involvement in Southern Africa) in order to set up national research teams in each country. Tore Linné Eriksen and Eva Helene Østbye constituted the Norwegian team, Pekka Peltola and Iina Soiri the Finnish team, and Christoffer Morgenstjerne and Karen Reiff the Danish one.

KAS: How was the work within the project carried out and what methods were used?
TS: Differently, due to the different Nordic countries’ various histories in this matter. In the case of Denmark, what was important to document was the articulation between the State and the NGO movement, because there was no direct official support to the liberation movements — the support was channelled via broadly based NGOs or popular movements like the churches, trade unions, etc. The Finnish study was to be focused on Finland and Southern Africa in the foreign policy options where the Soviet Union played a significant role, and on Finland’s role as a member of the Nordic community. For Norway and Sweden, the history is similar, so we decided that the Norwegian study should focus on a number of specific areas, like church involvement, solidarity movements, trade unions and some NGOs. In the case of Sweden, we decided to try to cover the history of the whole involvement. This was done through going through all available archival material (the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sida, the church, trade unions, solidarity movements).

In spite of the fact that the project was by design “eurocentric” in the sense that it was to document the Nordic involvement vis-à-vis
Southern Africa, archival material alone did not give a full picture. The ‘voice from the South’ was missing, and therefore some 80 interviews were carried out in Southern Africa and in Sweden. The archival search and the interview work took the first three years of the project. The result is more than 200,000 pages of copied material stored at the Nordic Africa Institute.

KAS: What has been the outcome of the project?
TS: Parallel to this project, the Nordic countries’ Africa policies were reviewed, due to the new situation in Africa after the end of the Cold War and with the liberation struggles being over. In connection with this, particular interest was shown in this project. During a visit to Cape Town in 1996, the Director of the Mayibuye Centre proposed a launching seminar with north-south participation for the first books of the project. As a result, a conference was held in February 1999 on Robben Island, South Africa, with participants from all the five Nordic countries, five Southern African countries, and a few others.

Charlotta Dohlvik (CD): The co-organisers of the conference were the Nordic Africa Institute, the Mayibuye Centre and the Robben Island Museum. Some 250 people took part in the opening, which took place in the South African parliament building and was addressed by the Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh on behalf of the Nordic countries, and by Tor Sellström on behalf of the project. The conference was officially opened by the then vice-president Thabo Mbeki. Around 100 people took part in the rest of the conference, which was held on Robben Island. Three books were launched: the Finnish study, the first volume of the Swedish study (covering the period 1950–70) and an interview volume. In addition, drafts of parts of volume two of the Swedish study, a draft of the Norwegian study and an outline of the Danish study were presented. In 2000, the full Norwegian study was published by the Nordic Africa Institute. Written reviews of the publications from the project have been very positive. The situation today is that the Danish study and volume two of the Swedish study have been submitted for publication at the Nordic Africa Institute.

KAS: What is happening now?
TS: I have re-joined Sida and am now working as an adviser to the Africa department.

CD: The material collected within the project is still stored at the Nordic Africa Institute. The material collected is of great relevance for historians of this period in Nordic foreign policy, as well as for historians from Southern Africa. It has not yet been decided in what way or what form it will be made available to researchers. One idea, however, is that it could be held at the Nordic Africa Institute together with some of the ‘grey’ material from the Institute’s library. There are also plans for a book launch trip (of volume two, the Swedish study) to Southern Africa.

Books from the research project

By: Ahmedou Ould Abdallah
Executive Secretary, Global Coalition for Africa, Washington, DC

The decision to establish the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA) was made during an international conference on Africa which took place in Maastricht, The Netherlands in 1990. The participants at the conference reached agreement on the necessity for an intergovernmental policy forum dedicated to forging policy consensus on development priorities among African governments and their northern partners. The underlying premise was that Africa can grow only from within, but to do so it needs outside support. The GCA’s mandate was to improve the working partnership between Africa and the North and to act as a catalyst for action by both sides.

The GCA’s added value lies in its unique and diverse composition, its emphasis on frank and honest exchange of views, and its discouragement of rhetoric. Underlining this, no formal presentations or country statements are made or binding resolutions adopted in the GCA meetings. Rather, open discussions deepen awareness of important issues that affect Africa’s development and its relations with its international partners. African countries are invited to participate in GCA meetings on the basis of their commitment to principles of good governance and sound economic management. Participation is generally at the ministerial level, and selected African heads of state frequently attend. Africa’s development partners are also represented at the ministerial and senior policy level. The involvement of parliamentarians, representatives of civil society organizations, the private sector, and more recently the military ensures that a variety of voices are heard and a diversity of opinions expressed.

The GCA has been at the forefront of emerging issues crucial for the development of Africa, such as governance and the transition to democracy. Based on the premise that good governance is one of the key elements underpinning the economic development of Africa, the GCA has consistently advocated the collaboration of governments and civil society to bring about tangible improvements in governance. More concretely, the GCA led the way in promoting peaceful political alternation. Thus, in addition to consolidation of the electoral systems and institutional mechanisms that facilitate genuine political competitions and popular choice, attention has been given to the role and status of former heads of state. At the GCA Policy Forum held in Dakar in October 1999 presidential term limits and the provisions afforded to former heads of state, including pension, security and their role and function, as well as the possible granting of amnesty, were examined. Conflict prevention, security and the role of the military, and the policy implications of urbanization have also been addressed in GCA meetings and publications.

The GCA has also been at the vanguard of the movement to combat corruption. Although discussed in prior meetings, the issue was given special focus when the GCA Policy Forum held in Maputo in October 1997 had corruption as its sole agenda item. As part of the follow-through, in October 1998 and February 1999 the GCA organized ministerial meetings to discuss a ‘Collaborative Framework to Address Corruption’. At the end of the second meeting which was opened by the President of the World Bank and attended by representatives of Africa’s partners, 11 African countries (Benin, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda) issued a statement adopting Principles to Combat Corruption. In 2001 the GCA held a meeting to prepare African countries in advance of the Second Global Forum on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity convened in The Hague in May of the same year.

Regional economic integration, the promotion of trade and investment, debt, and the involvement of the private sector in the economic development of Africa have been de-
bated in various GCA fora. The GCA’s Economic Committee Meeting held in South Africa in May 2001 had two principal agenda items: the rationalization of integration institutions and the promotion of agricultural productivity and competitiveness. It was agreed that agriculture continues to be the key sector of the economy in most African countries. Among measures recommended at the meeting were investment in rural infrastructure and the facilitation by external partners of market access for African agricultural and agro-industry products. The meeting also recommended that women farmers, who frequently face disadvantages and discrimination, be given equal access to agricultural services, land ownership and credit facilities.

With respect to regional integration, it was concluded that African countries need to encourage and promote regional economic integration to create larger and more competitive markets for their products. The meeting agreed that each country should re-evaluate its membership in several institutions and actively work for the rationalization of their mandates. Issues of sovereignty, production/productivity, infrastructure and free movement of people within countries and across borders also need serious attention. It was also agreed that there is a need for harmonization of trade and tariff regulations within sub-regions. For their part, external partners should ensure that the “regional dimension” is taken into account in country programs and policy recommendations.

The GCA’s holds Plenary Meetings once every five years to take stock of Africa’s political development and economic performance, and adopt new strategies for the evolving partnership between Africa and the international community. The latest GCA Plenary took place in October 2001 in Gaborone, Botswana, the first time a Plenary was held in Africa. ‘The Private Sector: Key to African Development’ was the principal theme of the meeting. Participants discussed in detail the constraints facing the private sector, and reached consensus on what actions need to be taken. Among other things, it was agreed that sound public policies, legitimate and credible institutions, and particularly a sound legal environment are needed for the promotion of a dynamic private sector. While opening up the economy and improving governance are of fundamental importance, specific actions by governments can also send positive signals and encourage the private sector. African businesses need to think about how to enter new markets or expand their market share, produce goods at competitive prices and understand the requirements of international markets.

It was recognized that although the primary responsibility for development lies with Africans themselves, properly targeted external support is also needed. Partner countries need to open their markets to African products and reduce domestic subsidies, particularly for agriculture, which continue to disadvantage African producers. Increased dialogue between development assistance agencies and the private sector would help to define how support could best be provided. Partnerships—between government, civil society and the private sector, among governments, and between African countries and their partners—form the basis of the new development paradigm that is emerging. The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) reflects this new paradigm and underscores the need for cooperative action to promote development, based on priorities set by African countries themselves.

The GCA Secretariat regularly publishes an Annual Report which reviews political and economic trends in Africa, supported by relevant development indicators. The Report also includes a brief essay on a topical issue related to African development. The Secretariat has also taken part in joint production of documents, publications and activities with other partners.

Policy direction for the Coalition, including approval of its work program, is provided by its Co-Chairpersons, who are chosen among the most prominent leaders in Africa or related to African affairs in the developed countries.
The Presidential Elections that took place from March 9–11, 2002 in Zimbabwe provoked enormous internal and international controversies. The impact of the politically contested continued presidency of Robert Mugabe, head of state and leader of the government under ZANU-PF since Zimbabwe’s Independence in 1980, for the country, the region and the continent might be far reaching. The consequences are not yet fully visible, but the current debates center around the case of Zimbabwe also as a litmus test for the notion of ‘good governance’ and democracy as perceived and acknowledged by other African leaders especially in the context of ‘The New Partnership for Africa’s Development’ (NEPAD). The contributions to this Discussion Paper offer critical and political comments from scholars mainly in or from the Southern African region, who have been closely involved with the regional and Zimbabwean issues.

The contributors are: Kenneth Good, University of Botswana in Gaborone; Amin Kamete, University of Zimbabwe, Harare; Stefan Mair, German Institute for International Security Affairs in Berlin, Germany; Henning Melber, the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden; Patrick Molutsi, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in Stockholm, Sweden; Tandeka Nkiwane, University of Cape Town, South Africa; Brian Raftopoulos, University of Zimbabwe, Harare; Ian Taylor, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Tor Sellström
ISBN 91-7106-448-6 (cloth), 912 pp, 590 SEK, 49.95 GBP, 79.95 USD (ill., 125 photographs)

Sweden’s and the other Nordic countries’ support for the national liberation process and struggle against apartheid was unique in the international context both in regard to the size of the financial support and the extensive popular involvement.

This book attempts to document the involvement of Sweden in the Southern African struggles against colonialism, occupation and white minority rule. While Volume I set out to identify the actors and factors behind the involvement, the aim of the present volume is to illustrate the Swedish participation.

The focus of this study is on official assistance to the national liberation movements but the important role played by the organized Swedish solidarity movement and other non-governmental organizations also forms part of the narration. The study also attempts to contribute to a broader understanding of the international aspects of the Thirty Years’ War in the region, a significant chapter in the quest for national self-determination, democracy and human rights towards the end of the troubled 20th century.

Primarily written for the general reader interested in relations between Sweden and the Southern African liberation movements, the presentation should also provide material and theoretical enquiries with regard to, for example, Swedish foreign policy in the cold war era; regional developments in a bipolar world; and the diplomatic initiatives, political alliances and material conditions of the different movements.
In recent decades there has been an increasing attempt by Muslim intellectuals to reflect on the provision of social welfare in Muslim societies in Africa. One reason for this is the few, if not non-existent, possibilities of the states to provide for the basic needs of their subjects, a situation that has become painfully evident in most African states not only the Muslim ones.

However, public as well as private provision of social welfare is not a new phenomenon in the Muslim world. Whereas government and public involvement in the provision of social welfare has been haphazard, despite various attempts at direct state involvement especially in the post-colonial world, private and what might be labelled semi-official activities, such as the establishment of pious foundations and the activities of the Sufi orders, have a solid foundation in local Muslim societies in Africa.

This book attempts to emphasise the variety of both agents and ways to provide social welfare in Muslim societies in Africa. In addition, social welfare, as such, is both reflected upon and debated by Muslim intellectuals. The aim of this book has therefore been to capture both the theoretical as well as the actual dimension of social welfare.

The contributors are: Franz Kogelmann, German Institute for Middle East Studies, Hamburg, Germany, Roman Loimeier, Department of Islamic Studies, University of Bayreuth, Germany, Sulemana Mumuni, Department for the Studies of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon, Rudiger Seesemann, the Special Research Project ‘Local Agency in Africa in the Context of Global Influences’, University of Bayreuth, Germany, Endre Stiansen, Research Centre for Development and Environment, University of Oslo, Norway, Knut S. Vikør, Centre for Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Bergen, Norway, Holger Weiss, Department of Asian and African Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland.
Conferences and Meetings

Liberation and Democracy in Southern Africa. A Consultative Workshop
13–14 December 2001, Cape Town, South Africa

This workshop was the first scholarly meeting within the research project on Liberation and Democracy in Southern Africa. It was organised in collaboration with the Centre for Conflict Resolution at the University of Cape Town. The 25 participants came from Sweden (two), Zimbabwe (three), Botswana (two), Namibia (three), Mozambique (one) and South Africa. They discussed conceptual issues and empirical case studies in several sessions, during which scholars from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa presented in total nine papers. The contributions centred on the meanings of both liberation and democracy in various contexts of the region.

An emphasis was on post-colonial experiences in Zimbabwe, with three staff members of the History Department at the University of Zimbabwe (Knox Chitivo, James Muzondidya and Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi) reflecting respectively on issues related to the role of the military, the ‘coloureds’ and women during and after the chimurenga. A session on regional aspects compared empirical surveys on democratic attitudes in Namibia (Christiaan Keulder) and Mozambique (Joao Pereira) as well as the degree of an institutionalised culture and protection of human rights within the security forces of Namibia and South Africa (Guy Lamb). Another session analysed recent trends in South Africa, with a theoretical reflection on state formation in transition (Michael Neocosmos), neo-liberalism and democracy (Ian Taylor) and the culture(s) of the ANC (Raymond Suttner).

The workshop provided a forum for an interesting and stimulating debate. The plural if not controversial nature of both the subject matter and the different schools of thought were represented by a variety of opinions and approaches. They underline the permissive character of the project as a network, embracing different views and theoretical as well as political positions in combination with several related academic disciplines such as history, political science, sociology and anthropology. Discussions confirmed that there is no single valid definition of either democracy or liberation. Debates also highlighted the substantial role of state formation as well as state influenced transformation of power structures and the modified reproduction of classes in the Southern African societies in transition.

The workshop also initiated discussions on a forthcoming conference within the research project. It is scheduled for 11–13 July 2002 in Windhoek, Namibia and will be jointly organised with two local institutions (Legal Assistance Centre and Namibia Institute for Democracy), which qualify as civil society actors. The theme for a Call for Papers was discussed. In the light of the indicated variety of existing concepts and paradigms it was agreed that the conference should explore further and seek clarification of the notions at hand. It was hence decided to invite contributions on ‘(Re-)Conceptualising Democracy and Liberation in Southern Africa’. A committee was formed with scholars from the University of Zimbabwe, Harare, the University of the Western Cape, the University of Pretoria and the Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo to support the Nordic Africa Institute’s research director in the selection process for the Windhoek Conference. It is the intention that the contributions presented to the workshop will be published by the Nordic Africa Institute in different Discussion Papers during the first half of 2002.

Henning Melber
Post-Conflict Transition in Sierra Leone: A Retrospective Analysis of the Ten-Year Civil War and a Research Agenda

Country Team Launch Workshop, 20–21 December 2001, Freetown, Sierra Leone

“Decision-makers and policy designers hardly appreciate that research is as important to them as diagnosis is to medical doctors (...). Sierra Leone is a very sick society. It is divided, wounded and bleeding. Like a very sick person, it needs careful and comprehensive diagnosis to determine the treatment it needs; otherwise we will be massaging an ailment that may need surgical operation (...). Research is imperative for proper understanding of the causes of the conflict and its character and dynamics.”

These were the words with which Professor Joe Pegmagbi, chair of Sierra Leone’s National Commission on Democracy and Human Rights began his keynote address to the workshop co-organised by the Nordic Africa Institute and a group of researchers from Sierra Leone, on 20–21 December 2002.

This was the inaugural workshop of a research and dialogue process initiated by the Nordic Africa Institute and researchers from Sierra Leone who have formed a Country Team, working with the Nordic Africa Institute’s Post-Conflict Transition Programme.

Country teams are self-constituted teams or networks of scholars working with the Nordic Africa Institute’s programme on what the members of the teams consider to be priorities for research and policy in the context of the reconciliation and reconstruction processes going on in their country. The primary objective is to do good research that could both add something substantial to the existing body of knowledge on post-conflict transition in Africa, and be of use to policy makers and civil society organisations taking part in the reconciliation and reconstruction of their country.

The workshop was attended by nine of the ten current members of the team. Three of the members are still based in Freetown; one is based in Cape Town, two in the UK and three in the US. Two more locally based scholars will join the team, at least one of whom will be a woman (there is already one woman in the team), so as to cover certain important areas identified by the group but which have not yet been covered. Two of the team members have been government ministers for some time, one of whom is now back in academia as a professor of history in the United States. The other ex-minister has set up a consultancy specialising in communication strategies.

Bringing together scholars who have had to leave the country and those still living there to work in the same team is one way of contributing to the rebuilding of the intellectual community whose fragmentation had been increased by the civil war. The participation of and interaction with members of civic organisations were seen as ways of heightening the social and policy relevance of the work of the team.

The workshop was devoted to a retrospective analysis of the civil war, and to key research and policy issues in the post-war reconstruction process. There were therefore three moments and kinds of presentations and discussions: on what happened and the explanations; on the role of certain institutions, such as the state, institutions of local governance such as the paramount chiefs and urban municipalities, and civil society organisations; and on the challenges of reconstruction, particularly those having to do with the state and with civil society (the media, etc).

The keynote address and two background papers (one on Armed Rebellion in Sierra Leone: Issues and Non-Issues, and another on Democratisation, Civil Society and the State) outlined the contextual and methodological issues to guide the work of the team, as well as the challenges. The background papers also had some useful comparative perspectives, and reference was made to Liberia, Angola, Mozambique, Ghana, Nicaragua and a number of other cases.

Explanations of the civil war overemphasising the role of minerals, for instance, were challenged and, instead, a more complex analysis taking into consideration sociological and political factors, such as the role of unemployed urban youth and students, some of whom were expelled from the University in the mid-eighties; the serious loss of legitimacy...
New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)

11 January 2002, Stockholm, Sweden

NEPAD—the New Partnership for Africa’s Development—was in focus on January 10, when the Nordic Africa Institute, the Swedish Parliament and the Swedish Development Forum (FUF) organised a public meeting in Stockholm. NEPAD is the African Union (former OAU) development initiative, which was adopted at the AU summit in June 2001. At the meeting a panel of six African foreign ministers (Benin, Senegal, Botswana, Tanzania, Ghana, South Africa), the Swedish and the Finnish foreign ministers, presented the African-Nordic dialogue on NEPAD. The meeting was held in conjunction with a joint Nordic–African foreign minister get-together in Stockholm.

This century will be the African century, and the African states will be referred to as African lions—a comparison with the Asian tigers who demonstrated great initiative and phenomenal economic development at the end of the last century—was the optimistic statement used by the South African foreign minister, Nkosasana Clarice Dlamini Zuma, to open up the presentation of NEPAD.

She defined NEDAP as: “some of the ideas we have as Africans, and how we together, as part of humanity, can make and turn those ideas into concrete actions”. She emphasised the fact that NEDAP is a plan by Africans for Africa as motivated by a challenge by Africans to take their rightful place as part of humanity. Talking about the characteristics of the plan she said: “NEDAP is a decision of Africans themselves to develop their plan and it was the Africans themselves who developed the plan. It is also the Africans themselves who have pledged to take certain responsibilities to make sure that NEDAP is implemented”.

The NEPAD initiative is an effort to show joint action by the African leaders with the aim to bring about democratic and economic reforms in partnership with western donors. Greater political integration on the continent is a necessity in a globalised world and will give better scope for economic development and peace and stability, the cornerstones of NEPAD—as well as improved health and education conditions, development of the infrastructure, including IT-infrastructure, reduction of poverty, and other long term goals. Her presentation was then followed up by the other African Ministers who gave a picture on what NEPAD meant to their countries and special situations. For a detailed résumé of the presentations at the meeting we recommend reading African Business and Economy no.1/2002.

The role of the Nordic countries in this process should be that of midwives, the South African foreign minister explained, as, for example, their support and partnership in international fora will be essential. The Swedish Foreign Minister, Anna Lindh, also empha-

Ebrima Sall

of the state and the political class as a whole were seen to be more plausible.

The specific research topics that the team will be taking up include the dynamics of a failed state; mining resources and post-war reconstruction; the media and civil society in post-conflict reconstruction; student leadership and institutional development; constitutionalism and state reconstruction; the civil service; the army, the police, prisons and security; human rights in post-conflict contexts; the political economy of democratisation in post-war Sierra Leone.

The team intends to come up with one or several quality academic publications, based as far as possible on extensive fieldwork and original material, but it would like its work to feed into the ongoing reconciliation and reconstruction process. Subsequent workshops held by the team will be coupled with a public forum of, say, one day during which the team will present their work and enter into a dialogue with representatives of civil society, government and donors. A dissemination strategy will be developed in due course. The ultimate aim of the team is to contribute to the rekindling of both academic and public policy debates, and to (re)establishing the intellectual leadership of the university.

Ebrima Sall
sised the importance of joint initiatives in international contexts, and said that she can see more scope for this after September 11. She mentioned several areas in which the African and the Nordic countries could create common understanding: the Great Lakes conflict, the political situation in Zimbabwe, the importance of conflict prevention and peace keeping actions, as well as the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

After the introduction the research Director of the Nordic Africa Institute, Dr Henning Melber, gave a scholar’s view on the challenges and problems in implementing the NEPAD initiative according to the agreements reached in Lusaka in June 2001. He pointed at the close relationship between the newly created African Union and NEPAD, at the possibilities for African regeneration, and at the new resolve to tackle the basic fundamentals for development which according to the NEPAD document are true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance. (Please find a slightly revised version of Melber’s presentation on p. 12.)

The presentations triggered off a great number of questions by the audience. Most of the responses pointed at the distance between the people and their representatives in Africa and the importance of citizen involvement for the successful implementation of NEPAD. The Swedish parliamentary representative emphasised the importance of dialogue between the ministers and their respective parliaments to anchor this initiative with the African people who they are representing. Another intervention drew attention to the issue of press freedom as an essential democratic right, especially in the context of acting as a check on good governance and providing a forum for dialogue in society.

Political leadership is crucial for development of any state and this joint initiative by the African leaders could prove to be an important vehicle for negotiations with the international community, which will be essential for success of the initiative. The greatest challenge will no doubt be to establish a collective ownership of the process with the African people and to bridge the top-down approach through greater dialogue with civil society.

Solveig Hauser

Bernhard Helander in Memoriam

Doctor Bernhard Helander, a close friend of the Nordic Africa Institute recently died in Uppsala after a period of illness. He devoted his academic, and to a certain extent also his personal, life to the Horn of Africa in general and to Somalia in particular. His Ph D thesis in Cultural Anthropology from 1988 entitled The Slaughtered Camel was a case in point. Since then he has led and participated in a number of studies and research projects with regard to the war-stricken and suffering people of Somalia.

Helander published several articles in this very journal and collaborated with the Institute in a number of important events and seminars on the development in his region of interest. When he called them, most scholars of and on the region would participate. Until the end, he was working on a book to document the role of research and researchers in the region’s recent developments, to give his support to this particular part of Africa. All of us at the Nordic Africa Institute who knew Bernhard, together with researchers from all over the world with whom he worked, will miss him.

Lennart Wohlgemuth
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Professor Bade Onimode (1944–2001) passed away on November 28, 2001 in Abuja after a brief illness. A world-renowned political economist, Bade had obtained his Bachelor and Master of Science (Part 1) degrees in economics at the University of Ibadan before earning an M.A. at the University of Chicago and a Ph.D at Ohio State University, also in economics. A specialist in development economics, macroeconomic theory and policy and international economics, he began a distinguished academic career at the University of Ibadan upon his return to Nigeria in 1972. This career was interrupted in 1978, when General Olusegun Obasanjo, then military head of state of Nigeria, dismissed Bade from the University, along with his colleagues Ola Oni, Omafume Onoge and Akin Ojo, for their political activism. Bade was then the head of the Association of University Teachers, which has since changed its name to the Academic Staff Union of Universities. He was reinstated at Ibadan in 1981, and went on to become a full professor in 1983, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences (1993–95) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs (1997–99).

Although I had known of him and previously read some of his publications, I first met Bade in 1986 in London, where we were invited to become members of the Council of the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA). It was through IFAA, of which he became the Council Chair, that he edited the widely read two-volume collection *The IMF, World Bank and the African Debt*. A prolific writer, he was the author of over 35 articles in professional journals and 15 technical reports for international organizations (i.a. ECOWAS, the International Labour Organization, the Organization of African Unity and the World Health Organization), in addition to a dozen books, including *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria*, *A Political Economy of the African Crisis and Africa in the World of the 21st Century*. My last interaction with Bade occurred in 2001 when, as a UNDP senior adviser for governance in Nigeria, I recommended him for appointment to the Independent Policy Group, a private think-tank set up for the new President Obasanjo by UNDP, the Soros Foundation, the Ford Foundation and Africare. To my surprise and delight, Bade not only joined the group, he was named its coordinator. Even in failing health, Bade continued to provide leadership to the Independent Policy Group in order to give the President the best advice possible on long-term policy options for Nigeria.

With his untimely death, Nigeria and Africa have lost a distinguished scholar and political activist. He will be greatly missed by those of us who knew him as a progressive intellectual committed to the empowerment of the poor and the total liberation of Africa from all forms of tyranny.

*Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja*

*Abuja, Nigeria*
The publication of International Politics and Foreign Policy in Africa South of the Sahara is an important event. Written in Norwegian by two Norwegian scholars, the book represents an alternative to textbooks in English, and in fact there are few comparable studies in any language. In Norway the book will serve as the main gateway to the study of the topic for students and others interested in Africa. The book is, however, as much about the nature of African states as the twin themes indicated in the title. For this reason it will also form perceptions of political culture in Africa. A critical examination is therefore in order of how the authors introduce the reader to politics in Africa.

The authors have one core thesis: African states have strong regimes but weak states. What does this statement mean? The authors give an elaborate explanation:

The African state functions in a contested field ["spenningsfelt"] between a legalistic, bureaucratic-rational framework and a person-based framework. As a rule, formal differentiation between person and office, between politics and economics, does not exist. And if it exists, it is not respected. For all practical purposes, these spheres are woven together in different exchange relations between equals and in patron-client relations. (p. 36)

This view owes a great deal to Médard’s and Bayard’s works on the post-colonial African state. The influence of Chabal and Daloz is also apparent.

How useful is the image that Bøås and Dokken convey of African state? Bøås and Dokken deserve credit for giving the reader a clear presentation of where they stand, but their perspective suffers from two weaknesses. First, they come very close to essentializing the African state. Second, in their view there is not really room for a distinction between rulers and ruled. The result is that vital political processes are ignored. To give one example. Not even the most ruthless African dictators (Amin, Abacha, Mengisthu, etc.) were able to stamp out opposition movements against their rule, and eventually they lost power. True, the transition from one regime to another has not always brought improvements for the common man, but all the same it is wrong to insinuate that African politicians are invariably corrupt, somehow incapable of elevating themselves above “the politics of the belly”.

The authors’ view of the African state gives birth to the book’s second major thesis: the African state system is stable yet constantly changing. Again a seemingly contradictory statement: what does it mean? The first part refers to the great stability that characterizes the state system in Africa. Even governments in countries with huge internal problems demonstrate remarkable staying power, and most heads of state keep their
offices longer than their counterparts in other parts of the world. Moreover, borders have remained unchanged since the colonial era, with the exception of the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia. The second part refers to the changing nature of “informal” or “unofficial” aspects of international relations in Africa.

At one level, African states relate to each other, and states elsewhere, in formal arenas such as the Organization of African Unity (now African Union) and the United Nations. But the formal dimension of international politics is supplemented and/or bypassed by a myriad of informal processes. To the authors, these informal processes are as important as the formal ones, and they may even be more important when it comes to the economic dimension of international relations. Two processes are singled out as particularly salient: transnationalization (defined as collaboration across national borders between both state and non-state actors) and regionalization (defined as strategies aimed at establishing a regional system inside a defined geographical area). Both are at work throughout Africa, and in the book empirical cases from West Africa and Central Africa are used to illustrate the authors’ theoretical perspectives.

Having established their analytical framework, Bøås and Dokken make several claims. One is that the region—not the state or system of states—should be the basic unit of analysis in international politics in Africa. Another is that Africa is not as marginalized in the global economy as conventional wisdom decrees. A third is that dominant theories of international politics are ill suited to understanding international politics in Africa. These claims are provocative but cannot be dismissed as without some substance.

To start with the first. The authors are quite right to give emphasis to the regional dimension of politics in Africa. In country after country, domestic conflicts spill over into neighbouring countries, and states define their zones of national interest more broadly than their legal frontiers. The tendency towards regionalization of conflicts is strengthened by the very fact that states are too weak to dominate cross-border relations. Examples or regions that fit this description are Congo, the Great Lakes, southern Sudan/northern Uganda and greater Liberia.

The authors make the case for their second claim by referring to the totality of Africa’s relations with the international community, and not just what is mentioned in official statistics etc. This opens for interesting perspectives. For instance, the authors put forward the argument that the grey and black economies provide examples of exchange relations that work (“fungerer”) far better than aid and conventional forms of economic cooperation. The authors’ point is not to sanction the entrepreneurship of warlords and their like; what they have in mind is that outside the formal economy there are many enterprises that are well integrated in the world economy. And it is (or should be) possible to learn from their successes. On the one hand, this sounds fair enough. It can be argued that it is the informal sector that keeps African economies alive, and undoubtedly there are lessons to be learnt. Indigenous systems of credit have shown remarkable resilience, and African entrepreneurs demonstrate stunning ingenuity, even under very adverse conditions. The trans-continental Mouride networks shows that African entrepreneurs may be second to none when it comes to identifying profitable niches in the global economy. On the other hand, it is far from certain that it will be possible to bring the successful parts of the informal economy into the formal economy. People who engage in economic activities outside the official economy have their reasons to do so, and they are likely to resist incorporation into the formal economy. Moreover, enterprises in the grey or black economy tend to be run on the basis of extreme short-termism, in the sense that owners want to take out maximum profit in the least possible time. Combined these factors mean that the community at large benefits very little from the unofficial activities, and in most places predatory behaviour seems to be an apt designation.

The third claim is less controversial today than it would have been some ten or twenty years ago since scholars from around the world have demonstrated the inherent western bias
of the dominant theories of international politics. The authors do not advocate the total dismissal of conventional theories; on the contrary they argue that some common concepts and ideas (state, anarchy, sovereignty, etc.) provide useful reference points for the study of international politics in Africa as well. The authors’ major criticism of dominant Anglo-Saxon theories is that they do not provide researchers and students with the tools necessary to understanding the key feature of the African state system, viz. that it is “a system with a stable and static surface, which co-exists with a system where (formal and informal) transnational and regional processes generate continuous change” (p. 38).

The central challenge for political scientists working on international politics in Africa is to develop a theory that incorporates both stability and change. Bøås and Dokken do not propose their own theory, but suggest new efforts at building an African theory may start with Clapham’s thesis about “degrees of statehood” and Médard’s concept of the “neopatrimonial state”.

The book includes quite a few pages of historical contextualization. This provides useful background for interesting discussions of relations between former colonies and the colonial powers. Quite rightly the point is made that the webs of mutual dependency that were established during the colonial era have been very resistant to change. The weight of history is one reason why it has proved so difficult to establish strong regional organizations on the continent. Yet the presentation of the historical experience is halting because the authors too readily accept out-of-date stereotypes. For instance, the claims that the French colonial administrators ruled through culturally assimilated elites, and that British officials through the policy of indirect rule, “let the traditional patterns of social organization remain more or less intact” (p. 124) are over-simplifications. As historical studies have demonstrated, assimilation is a very ambiguous concept, and indirect rule was more about inventing traditions than respecting traditions.

So far this review has focused on what the authors say in their book. In an introductory textbook, what is not said is as important and two issues are worth commenting upon: First, the bibliography includes comparatively few works by Africans. This may reflect the current state of international politics research, but all the same it is unfortunate because it perpetuates the marginalization of African scholarship, not least the contributions of scholars working on the continent. Furthermore, inclusion of African perspectives would have refined the authors’ own argumentation, for instance by references to recent publications by Mbembe and Mamdani. The near absence of African scholarship is all the more surprising because we are well aware of the problem of “hegemonic knowledge production”. But the issue is discussed in the context of inherent Western perspectives of international politics as an academic discipline.

Second, the book maintains the convention of dividing Africa in two halves: Africa north and south of the Sahara. This puts unfortunate constraints on the analysis. By treating the continent as a whole, the authors could have pursued topics such as the tension between “African” and “Arab” identity, petrodollar diplomacy, block voting in the United Nations, Egypt’s strategies to retain control over the waters of the Nile, the impact of the flow of cultural ideas across the Sahara, and other topics that have a direct bearing on international politics in Africa.

These reservations are important, but they do not alter the basic conclusion already hinted at. Bøås and Dokken have written a pioneering book that will have a great impact on Norwegian perceptions of politics in Africa; because of similarities between the Scandinavian languages, it may well be successfully exported to Denmark and Sweden and hence be equally influential in these countries as well.

Endre Stiansen
University of Oslo

All translations from Norwegian to English are by the present author.

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References mentioned in the text and suggested reading:


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**List of Received Publications**

The following publications have been submitted to the Institute for review:


