

# Journal für Entwicklungspolitik (JEP)

Austrian Journal of Development Studies

Herausgeber:

Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik an den  
Österreichischen Universitäten  
Projekt Institut für Internationale Entwicklung /  
Zentrum für überfachultäre Forschung der Universität Wien

Redaktion:

Gerald Faschingeder, Karin Fischer,  
Margit Franz, Irmi Hanak,  
Franz Kolland (verantwortl.), René Kuppe, Brita Neuhold,  
Andreas Novy, Herwig Palme,  
Christof Pamreiter, Kunibert Raffer,  
Andreas Schedler, Walter Schicho,  
Anselm Skuhra, Sandra Zech

Board of Editors:

John-ren Chen (Innsbruck), Hartmut Elsenhans (Leipzig),  
Jacques Forster (Genève), John Friedmann (St. Kilda),  
Peter Jankowitsch (Paris), Friedrich Katz (Chicago),  
Helmut Konrad (Graz), C. T. Kurien (Madras),  
Ulrich Menzel (Braunschweig), Jean-Philippe Platteau (Namur),  
Dieter Rothermund (Heidelberg),  
Heribert Steinbauer (Wien), Paul Streeten (Boston),  
Osvaldo Sunkel (Santiago de Chile)

Brandes & Apsel / Südwind

Auf Wunsch informieren wir regelmäßig über das Verlagsprogramm sowie die Beiträge dieser Zeitschrift. Eine Postkarte an den Brandes & Apsel Verlag, Scheidswaldstr. 33, D-60385 Frankfurt a. M. genügt. Oder per e-mail: **Brandes-Apsel@t-online.de** genügt. Nähere Informationen über bisher erschienene Hefte (Schwerpunkte, Beiträge etc.) erhalten Sie auch direkt unter folgender Internet-Adresse:  
<http://www.univie.ac.at/int-entwicklung/jep>

Gefördert aus öffentlichen Mitteln  Österreichische  
 Entwicklungszusammenarbeit

**Journal für Entwicklungspolitik (JEP)**  
 ISSN 0258-2384, ISBN 3-86099-629-9, Erscheinungsweise: vierteljährlich,  
 Heft 1/2002: XVIII. Jg.  
 Preis Einzelheft: € 9,90/ sFr 18,30, Preis Jahresabonnement: € 39/ sFr 68,-  
 Abonnementsbezug für Deutschland, Schweiz u. a.:  
 Brandes & Apsel Verlag GmbH, Scheidswaldstr. 33, D-60385 Frankfurt a. M.  
 Abonnementsbezug nur für Österreich:  
 Südwind-Buchwelt Buchhandelsges. m. b. H., Baumgasse 79, A-1034 Wien  
 Redaktionsadresse:  
 Journal für Entwicklungspolitik, Währingerstr. 17/104, A-1090 Wien  
 E-mail: [int-entwicklung@univie.ac.at](mailto:int-entwicklung@univie.ac.at)

1. Auflage 2002  
 © by Brandes & Apsel Verlag GmbH, Scheidswaldstr. 33,  
 D-60385 Frankfurt a. M.  
 Jede Verwertung bedarf der vorherigen schriftlichen Zustimmung der Redaktion und des Verlages. Das gilt insbesondere für Nachdrucke, Bearbeitungen und Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in allen Arten von elektronischen und optischen Systemen, der öffentlichen Wiedergabe durch Hörfunk-, Fernsehsendungen und Multimedia sowie der Bereithaltung in einer Online-Datenbank oder im Internet zur Nutzung durch Dritte. Namentlich gekennzeichnete Beiträge geben nicht in jedem Fall die Meinung des Verlages wieder.  
 Offenlegung nach § 25 Mediengesetz: Medieninhaber: Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik an den Österreichischen Universitäten, Währingerstr. 17/104, A-1090 Wien. Grundlegende Richtung des JEP: Wissenschaftliche Analysen und Diskussionen von entwicklungspolitischen Fragestellungen und Berichte über die entwicklungspolitische Praxis. Verantwortlich für Inhalt und Korrekturen sind die Autoren bzw. die Redaktion.  
 Umschlaggestaltung: Volker Plass, Wien  
 Satz: Ch. Weismayer, A-1080 Wien/A-5026 Salzburg  
 Druck: Difo-Druck OHG, Bamberg, Deutschland  
 Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem und chlorfrei gebleichtem Papier

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme:  
 Ein Titeldatensatz für diese Publikation ist bei der Deutschen Bibliothek erhältlich.

ISSN 0258-2384  
 ISBN 3-86099-629-9

**JOURNAL FÜR ENTWICKLUNGSPOLITIK, XVIII. Jg., Heft 1, 2002**  
 Austrian Journal of Development Studies

**African Empowerment:  
 Knowledge and Development**  
**Issue editor: Henning Melber**

Editorial . . . . .	5
<b>Artikel</b>	
Stein Sundstøl Eriksen Councils, Capacity Building and the State: The Context of Local Government Reform in Tanzania . . . . .	9
Thandika Mkandawire African Intellectuals, Political Culture and Development . . . . .	31
Ebrima Sall Social Sciences in Africa . . . . .	49
Lennart Wohlgemuth Universities in Sub-Saharan Africa . . . . .	69
Bawa Yamba In this Time of AIDS: Capacity Building in Africa - An Anthropological Perspective . . . . .	81
<b>Rezension</b> . . . . .	89
Über Autoren und Autorinnen . . . . .	91
Informationen für Autoren und Autorinnen . . . . .	92

**Thandika Mkandawire**

### **African Intellectuals, Political Culture and Development<sup>1</sup>**

One problem of writing about African intellectuals is that we still lack what Jean Copans (1994) calls a "sociology of African intellectuals". This absence of a sociology does not, however, logically lead to his conclusion that there is no "Homo Academica Africanus". The "silence" of the 1980s – both imposed and self-imposed – may have fortified this perception, not only of invisibility but also of non-existence. African intellectuals exist and have become much more self-conscious of their condition and, with the wave of democratisation, are becoming more visible (Mafeje 1993). In sociological terms African intellectuals have, at least until quite recently, largely been of peasant and working class origin, which partly explains their visceral "populism". Another increasingly prominent feature of African intellectuals is their diasporic position. "Brain drain", driven by political "push" at home and economic "pull" from abroad has hit Africa hard and, consequently, a significant proportion of African intellectual contributions emanate from outside the continent.

The relationship between nationalism and intellectuals or intelligentsia, has been widely debated. More specifically, there has been interest in explaining intellectuals' fascination with or adhesion to nationalism. Some have attributed it to self-interest by intellectuals whose path to material or professional ascendency was blocked by the coloniser. National liberation is thus seen as a way of acceding to positions of power. Other less cynical interpretations attribute it to the skills of intellectuals to articulate in some coherent form the aspirations of their countrymen and women. Still others attribute to the intellectuals a fascination with a fad – nationalism being one of the products of modernisation. All this may be true, but it seems to me that to the extent that most colonised peoples seek decolonisation it would have been strange if intellectuals did not share this aspiration. There is a strong moral case against colonisation and there is, after all, moral agency in many intellectual endeavours.

#### **1. Sovereignty and Nation-building**

The question for development or, more prosaically, the eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease – the unholy trinity against which the nationalists were

<sup>1</sup> This essay is based on a considerably larger paper presented originally at the African Studies Association of Australasia & the Pacific 22nd Annual & International Conference held at University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia, 26–28 Nov. 1999 and hence been published in the *African Studies Review and Newsletter* of the African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific.

# **Bücher, Musik, Zeitschriften für diese eine Welt**

## **zweimal für Wien**

Wien 7., Mariahilfer Straße 8  
weltmusik@suedwind.at

Wien 9., Schwarzspanierstraße 15  
buchwelt@suedwind.at

## **einmal für den Rest der Welt**

Versand: A-1034 Wien, Postfach 90  
versand@suedwind.at



**Südwind-Buchwelt BuchhandelsGmbH**

Tel.: +43-1-798 83 49, Fax: +43-1-798 83 75

**WWW.suedwind.at**

**SÜDWIND**

drawn – was widely shared in African intellectual circles. One has only to look at the publications of CODESRIA to see this. The name of the flagship of CODESRIA is *Africa Development*, and for years every research programme had “development” attached to it. “Technology and Development”, “Education and Development”, “Women and Development”, etc. However, by the 1980s a reaction began to emerge. African intellectuals began to critique “developmentalism” – not because material progress was undesirable but because as an ideology it absolutized economic growth to the exclusion of other values – culture, human rights (Ake 1979; Shivji 1980). At the 1986 CODESRIA General Assembly, a decision was taken to drop “development” again not because it ceased to matter but because it tended to overshadow other growing concerns of the African intellectual community – human rights, cultural autonomy, gender equality, national cohesion etc.; because it negated or marginalised other values by posing itself as the ultimate end of all African endeavours and not as a means to some high goals; and because of the totalising and repressive hold it had on politics and its use by both donors and national governments to justify whatever they were doing. It was an objection to the sign “Silence: development in progress” that African leaders sought to hang at the door to our nations and societies. More specifically in the African context, we were responding to the terrible uses to which the notion had been put – to suppress human rights, to compel people into social arrangements that were not desirable, to ride roughshod on people’s identities and cultures, etc. But development in the sense of addressing the material needs of society was squarely on our agenda. Indeed, the urgency of defending “development” was to be highlighted by the “adjustment” ideology, which reduced economic policy to debt repayment and satisfaction of an ideologically driven reification of the market, and relegated issues of economic development, democracy and equity to perfunctory rhetoric.

This said, there were, of course, differences in interpretation. Few African scholars shared the “modernisation” linear approach to development and most were attracted to the view that (a) development was not a linear process; nations could achieve growth via paths other than those traversed by the developed countries; and (b) the world system was not neutral or benign with respect to development. To confront a world system that was seen as hostile to development, “delinking” or “collective self-reliance” were proposed. There were also considerable controversies as to what social class or institutions would be most appropriate under the circumstances. In general, many African intellectuals doubted if the African political class had the “political will” to seriously pursue the development of their respective countries. The corruption and self-aggrandisement of the leaders merely lent more support to these doubts.

There are a number of ways of reacting to the failure to “develop” – or to the “impasse”, as its has been dubbed<sup>1</sup>. One response is to question the validity of the objective itself and to say that we never wanted “development” anyway, that it was a Eurocentric, external imposition. This questioning of development has largely been posed by intellectuals or activists from outside Africa and from

Africa’s own diaspora. In most cases this has involved well-meaning paternalism, which invariably fails to take African agency seriously in the development saga, or is a reflection of the ignorance how “development” entered our respective national agendas.

The critiques of African intellectuals have been focused on examining what went wrong in achieving what they generally view as desirable<sup>2</sup>. The argument is basically one of “Bringing Development Back In”, but this time with a democratic face and cultural soul. Their criticism of the governments is that they have abandoned the developmental vision that was so central to nationalism<sup>3</sup>. Considerable energy has been expended on criticising structural adjustment programmes, largely for their anti-development bias in favour of stabilisation and debt repayment and their negative effects on democratisation, either through weakening of the state to deliver substantive gains to the populace or through its curtailment of democratic space by imposing technocratically driven conditionalities.

There are also new critiques of development in African circles. Postmodernism has reached Africa largely via African scholars in diaspora and South African (mostly White) scholars. Francophone African scholars are also playing a leading role here partly because economics has rarely dominated the discourse on development there, as it has in Anglophone intellectual circles. Some elements of the ecologist critique have also entered African discourse. This has questioned the replicability of the Western model, especially with respect to environmental sustainability. However, this has not had much resonance in African intellectual circles in which concerns with intra-temporal distribution issues (North-South issues) overwhelmingly exceed the inter-temporal, intergenerational concerns that dominate Western discourse on the environment.

Well-taken though some of the forewarnings of the dangers of prosperity and consumerism are, and of the “Faustian Bargain” that development entails, they often ring hollow as nostalgic paeans to a past and living conditions that none of these “advocates of post-developmentism” would seek to leave in. We must remember that for those in the developed countries, rejection of material progress and prosperity (most of which is never more than rhetorical) is a matter of choice and discretion. It has more the character of fasting. In Africa, it would be at best making virtue out of necessity. It would be like trying to find a moral equivalence of starvation and fasting. Although fasting and starvation may involve similar nutritional processes (eating less) yielding identical biological outcomes (loss of weight), they are entirely different social processes.

Reading some of the recent descriptions of the development debacle, you would be made to believe that the whole thing was a “discourse” that took place in Northern capitals or aid missions, and somehow spilled over to African intelligentsia who drew inspiration and ideas uncritically. In the more solipsistic renditions of all this, the reality of poverty and underdevelopment are occulted so that the validity of debates on development is determined entirely at the level

of discourse, with some boldly proclaiming that we, in Africa, have unbeknownst to ourselves entered a post-developmental era, where we can engage in our myriad identities and hybridity, without the nagging narratives of poverty, ignorance and disease. This is not idle speculation.

One shares Takaki's concerns that a political economy of development will be sacrificed to "scholarly representations of other scholarly representations of original representations – feasts of intellectual delights detached from the reality of poverty, racism, greed, theft, chicanery and exploitation" (Takaki 1995). These fears are real and it would be most unfortunate if this nihilistic posture dominated thinking in Africa, for it would undermine the strong humanist concerns that have sustained African scholarship all these years. I am, however, consoled by the knowledge that most African social scientists still possess enough sense to see that the poverty of their people in pristine natural conditions is not the answer. Poverty still roams in Africa unchallenged by the vast human knowledge, social skills and experience of its populations. In our forests, Savannah and Sahel, it is far from an endangered species. Indeed it now occupies a central place in the African social drama, and it is the face of Africa that much of the world is most familiar with.

## 2. The Problem with Democratization

The questions that immediately arose after independence were: how does one govern societies in which ethnic identities are strong and tend to glide easily into tribalism? And what state structure is appropriate for "development"? The almost universal response in Africa was one-party rule. In its most idealised form, one party rule would provide a common forum through which all groups would be heard. It eventually tripped on the inherent contradictions of "one party participatory democracy". The great source of incoherence arose from the failure to reconcile what were obviously socially pluralistic arrangements in terms of class and ethnicity, with political and economic arrangements that were monolithic and highly centralised.

Some have argued that experiments in democracy have failed because political parties have evolved along tribal lines. This may have been true. But it is equally true that the institutional arrangements bequeathed us by our erstwhile colonial masters did not facilitate things. Indeed, they made things devastatingly worse. The "winner take all" constitutional arrangements led to results that totally denied countries' social pluralism and easily led to exclusion of large sections of the population. Indeed, the "regional balance" arrangements practised by the one party regimes seemed more cognisant of the social complexities of African nation-states than the outcomes generated by the constitutional arrangements that we have so mimetically adopted as our own.

During the struggle for independence, nationalism sought historical and cultural anchors – or a usable past – for its sustenance. And in the early years

of independence there was a genuine attempt to find new expressions for what was happening, or expected to be edified, in post-colonial Africa. African intellectuals shared this quest. However, they were soon to discover that the "usable" pasts they had sought to construct for the nationalists could be turned into "abusable pasts" in the hands of a growing self-serving political class which could unscrupulously declare that authoritarian rule corresponded to traditional forms of governance or that multi-party democracy was alien to African culture. This led to the "break" that still prevails today.

Few African leaders sought to cultivate an indigenous "intellectualiat" that was, in the Gramscian sense, "organic"<sup>14</sup>. The kind of rapport that the Indian nationalist sustained with the intellectual in the post-colonial period or the links that Jewish intellectuals had to the Israeli state was rarely seen in Africa. There was nowhere in Africa, except perhaps Algeria, where the intellectuals were as organic to the FLN movement and government, and South Africa, where Afrikaner intellectuals were close to the apartheid regime. One consequence is that African nationalist post-colonial project had no organic intellectuals and the few that sought to assume that role were reduced to purveyors of apologetics. A number of reasons account for this historical peculiarity.

First was the conceptualisation of the African university as simply producing the "manpower" to indigenise the civil service. And so the first wave of the African intelligentsia was absorbed up by the state and parastatal bureaucracies. Once indigenisation was achieved, most governments had little argument for continued support to the African university. In the 1980s there was a new wave of African professions closely linked with the need for greater control of development by the aid establishment and its insatiable quest for feasibility studies, evaluations and "rapid assessment" results. Professionalization of intellectual life was thus not due to the munificence of African states but of the contracts from foreign governments and NGOs (Bangura 1994; Mkandawire 1998). African governments could only access their own intellectuals through donor-contracted reports. This should not be interpreted as suggesting that African intellectuals were close to the foreign "Prince". Donors themselves usually exhibited ill-disguised contempt for local intellectuals whom they were either mercenary or felt criticised them but offered no alternatives, or were part of the rent-seeking or clientalist cliques that had benefited from past policies so that their opposition to "reform" was self-serving. With such a view of local capacities, donors were to embark on the unending task of "capacity building".

Second, the repressive politics that became the norm simply left no room for the growth of intellectuals occupying public space (for problems of academic freedom in Africa see (Africa Watch 1991; Codesria 1996; Diouf and Mamdani 1983; Mkandawire 1996). Many spaces that were open (at least theoretically) to intellectuals elsewhere were either erased, infested or occupied, sometimes physically so that neither "ivory towers", nor "Olympian detachment" nor "self-imposed" marginalisation were meaningful options. In addition, most of the spaces over which we could exercise our autonomy were funded by outsiders

who also sought to delimit our intellectual spheres. Such were the constraints that in most cases the choice was between exile, sullen self-effacement and invisibility, or sycophantic and fawning adulation of power. There were, of course, those who heroically gave themselves the option of standing up and fighting – ending up in jail or dead.

Third, African governments relied heavily on foreign mentors, admirers or sycophants for intellectual inspiration or affirmation. Thus Nyerere had a band of foreign "Fabian socialists" who had easy access to him, in sharp contrast to Tanzanians who had difficulties seeing Nyerere. Kaunda had John Hatch as a close intellectual associate, who was invited to be the first director of the Institute for Humanism; Nkrumah had surrounded himself with pan-Africanists, such as George Padmore and W. E. B. Dubois. In later years there were European and America "radicals" who were later to appear as peripatetic advisors to a whole range of "progressive" regimes in Africa.

Fourth was the penchant of African leaders to assume the role of philosopher king and to reduce intellectual work to the incantation of the thought of the leader. Leaders sought to acquire intellectual hegemony by themselves or through advisors constructing intellectual frameworks which would guide national debates. Nkrumah with his pan-Africanism and Nkrumahism, Nyerere with his Ujamaa, and Kaunda with his Humanism are some well-known ideological constructs. In many cases most of the ideological schema propounded by African leaders were highly idiosyncratic and often so incoherent as to be beyond the comprehension of the propagators themselves. Adhesion to them was not only difficult but also hazardous: to those sycophants who diligently sought to follow the leader through infinite twists and turns as the leader sought to bridge the cavernous gap between the rhetoric of national goals and reality of predatory self-aggrandisement.

Fifth was the complete misunderstanding of the task that lay ahead. African leaders either overestimated the power and capacity of the "kingdom" Nkrumah had enjoined them to seek, or underestimated the intellectual and political complexity of the processes of development and nation-building. As Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992: 164) notes: "When the postcolonial rulers inherited the apparatus of colonial rule, they inherited the reigns of power, few noticed, at first, they were not attached to a bit." And by all accounts they and the foreign donors continue to underestimate how knowledge intensive the process would have to be.

Sixth was the "relevance" of our research. Governments often argued that our research was "irrelevant", by which they meant that it was not immediately usable in policy matters. Governments often insisted on eschewing basic research to engage in what was called "applied research". In this they were strongly supported by donors – both governmental and non-governmental. In some cases, the "relevance" issue spilled over to question the quality of the education process, with academics insisting on standards and governments insisting, in a populist manner, on relevance – a tug-of-war that led Paul Zeleza (1997) to state:

"The University entered independent Africa in chains, on the one hand, firmly tethered to the academic Gold Standard of Western intellectual currency, conventions and concerns, and on the other pulled by the unyielding demands of nationalism and developmentalism."

The earliest collision between the nationalists and intellectuals occurred over the relationship between excellence and relevance of African universities. Excellence was associated with the universal "Gold Standard" – which in the African case really meant the standards of universities of the erstwhile colonial power. African governments tended to reduce relevance to the provision of "manpower" resources for development and incantations of the ideology of the ruling party. African scholars have, like anyone else, been torn between the quest for universalistic understanding of society and the need to bring out the specificities of their societies. The nationalists sometimes read this an "colonial mentality" or "elitism". The conflict was in a sense superficial. As the late Sam Nolutshungu argued (1999), universities had to seek excellence as African universities and had to be embedded in their society. In any case, African governments resolved the conflict by simply denying universities either excellence or relevance. In this they received the intellectual support of the World Bank whose "rates of return" mumbo jumbo suggested Africa could do without much higher education.

The question of relevance, appropriateness and meaningfulness of what they were producing touched a soft spot among African scholars and "a source of considerable soul searching among the social science community" (Bujra 1994). African intellectuals have been under enormous pressure to "account for themselves" (Mafeje 1993). Not surprising, many members of the African "professoriat" have raised serious doubts on their role as intellectuals and the relevance of the institutions they inhabited or run.

Abdalla Bujra (1994: 125) notes the general consensus among policy-makers and intellectuals on the basic tasks of the new nations and states:

"Unfortunately however it is not clear whether the knowledge produced by these institutions at the time had any direct or indirect contribution to the modest economic growth of most African countries during the 60s. Furthermore and with hindsight, barring the few brilliant exceptions of scholars such as Samir Amin and Ali Mazrui, there were no sparks nor any form of development in the social sciences in African countries during the period. These institutions were largely transmitters of metropolitan social science in their respective countries."

Ali Mazrui (1993: 119) has argued that

"The African university was conceived primarily as a transmission belt for Western high culture, rather than a workshop for the transfer of Western high skills. African universities became nurseries for a Westernised black intellectual aristocracy. Graduates of Ibadan, Dakar, Makerere acquired Western social tastes more readily than Western organisation skills. Those graduate became steeped in Western consumption patterns rather than Western

productive techniques. We became wordsmiths – and often despised blacksmiths!”

In a similar vein Mahmood Mamdani (1993) has articulated this concern thus: “In our single minded pursuit to create centres of learning and research of international standing, we had nurtured researchers and educators who had little capacity to work in surrounding communities but who could move to any institution in any industrialised country and serve any privileged community around the globe with comparative ease. In our failure to contextualise standards and excellence to needs of our own people, to ground the very process and agenda of learning and research in our conditions, we ended up creating an intelligentia with little stamina for the very process of development whose vanguard we claimed to be. Like birds who cross oceans when the weather turns adverse, we had little depth and grounding, but maximum reach and mobility. So that, when the going got rough, we got going across borders.”

More acerbically, Achilles Mbembe (1985) has accused universities of being “numbed by conformity and put to sleep by self-satisfaction and routine”:

“... the African universities do not seem to have been able to become true centres of elaboration, of criticism, and of dissemination of new forms of thought. It seems as if the African university has been incapable of integrating into its process of formal training the kinds of non-formal education, the totality of popular knowledge transmitted by the entire collectivity, which tries to answer as much as to the different needs of groups as to the possibilities of apprenticeship offered to all. In other words the African universities have turned their back on the life of African societies.”

On the intellectuals themselves, Issa Shivji (1980) has strongly condemned African intellectuals:

“... the present crisis has brought in sharp relief the complete passivity and marginality of African intellectuals in the political and social life of our nations”. He adds: “We as intellectuals have distinguished ourselves by our silence, submission and subservience, rather than courage and consistency.”

In a similar view Abiola Irele (1992: 212) wrote:

“The moral indolence is matched by an intellectual indolence. Outside a few circles of writers and intellectuals, generally of radical persuasion-pools of light in a vast of conceptual darkness – there is no sustained thought in this country, no coherent intellectual, cultural, moral connection with any scheme of ideas, western or African. The Israelites in exile singing of their unhappy lot likened the sky above them to a sheet of bronze over their heads. Matthew Arnold, in his *culture and Anarchy* made use of this biblical image to characterise the intellectual climate of Victorian England. Here, I am afraid the intellectual sky above us is made of gross material: it is not even bronze but wooden.”

Understandable though some of the anger and frustration may be, it does considerable injustice to the record and African intellectuals. First, it generalises

too much. I agree with Mafeje's assertions (1993) that by any standard African intellectuals have not been that silent, submissive or subservient: “if anything, the likelihood is that they talked too much too soon”. Mafeje attributes their lack of inhibition or reserve to the fact they were part of the dominant African elite. Therefore, at the beginning they felt no need to be submissive or subservient to anybody. Such a state did not, of course last long. One should also bear in mind that as “national” intellectual spaces were squeezed by the state, African intellectuals actively sought to create new regional or continental spaces through which they could find a voice.

As to the question of relevance, my own view is that if our research was “irrelevant”, it was not in the simplistic “basic” and “applied” research dichotomy. It was, rather, at two other levels. One was the oppositional stance of most African intellectuals and their unwillingness to be “usable” by some of the unsavoury regimes that littered the African continent. One simply did not want to be relevant to a Mobutu (V. V. Mudimbe is reported to have run away from Zaire after having refused a seat on the central committee of Mobutu's ruling party) or Banda. “Relevance” would have been as good a case as any of “adverse organicity”. Those of a more revolutionary temperament simply did not see any point in advising regimes that were doomed by history or by imminent revolution. In addition, repression bred alienation which, combined with Africans' visceral populism, only bred an oppositional stance toward government.

The second, and more serious problem was whether our basic research really addressed the key issues and whether, when it borrowed concepts, it was sufficiently sensitive to the specificities of our own conditions. Here I have my doubts. One interesting idea is how we read “foreign ideas”. The analysis of Africa was dominated by others whose purposes for studying us were driven by their own concerns. We consequently ended up studying ourselves as if we studied the “other” – only that in our case the “other” was ourselves. Part of the self-criticism among African intellectuals has been around this “extroversion” and that we are too attentive to the intellectuals fads of the West. Paulin Hountoungui (1992) and Kwesi Prah have accused African scholarship of mimesis of the worst kind. Kwesi Prah (1998: 160) argues:

“For us who ... have the benefit of middle age and hindsight, we recognise that we have in our formation been subjected to successive intellectual fashions born in the west. The intellectual fads have affected successive generations of African intellectuals and shaped their thinking on Africa and the world, but have hardly provided viable inspirational or ideological sources for transformation which translate into the betterment of the quality of life of African humanity.”

Some have suggested that African intellectuals are no more than the “informed native guide, the *comprador* in cultural commodities. We often tended to forget that ideas that described progress elsewhere and negative impact on us were contingent and only true if nothing happened on our side. While we understood that the other side of the dynamism of capitalism would be imperialism and

exploitation and underdevelopment of the periphery, we never really fully developed an effective strategy to capture that dynamism in the context of being a "late comer". "Delinking" simply skirted the issue and was eventually self-defeating. There were, of course, attempts to marry Marxism with nationalist concerns but this proved infinitely complicated. In some cases, in order to consummate the marriage, categories central to one theoretical scheme were transferred to another, rendering the whole marriage even more incongruous. Thus Claude Ake (1979) could speak of "proletarian nations" so as to straddle the Marxist world of class struggle and the nationalist struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism. This invariably proved unsatisfactory, largely because it failed to take each of these struggles seriously on its own terms.

Much has been written on the integrity of African intellectuals and their relationship with the state. African academics were constantly reminded that they were part of the privileged class and "bourgeoisie of the diploma" to boot. They were accused of being literary the "Trojan Horse" of western culture, "a relay of cultural imperialism" (Verhaegen 1995) disseminating ideas that undermined or denigrated their own cultures. Thus Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992: 240) suggests that:

"Post-coloniality is the condition of what we may ungenerously call a *corridor* intelligentsia: of a relatively small, western-style, western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery. In the West they are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other and for Africa."

A recent pillorying of the African intellectual comes from the Right:

"Throughout Africa's post-colonial history, the opportunism, unflappable sycophancy and trenchant collaboration have allowed tyranny to become entrenched. Doe, Mobutu, Mengistu and other military dictators legitimised their regimes by buying off and co-opting Africa's academics for a pittance ... Do Africa's intellectuals learn? Never ... Therefore whatever happens to Africa's intellectuals – whether at the hands of the military despots or their own people – shed no tears for them. Never" (Aiyithey 1996: 35)<sup>5</sup>

Another criticism has been on how "state centric" African intellectuals have been i.e. their tendency to view the state as the motive force of social change and development or to define oneself only in relationship to the state. Writing on Senegalese intellectuals vis-à-vis the state, Aminata Diaw (Diaw 1993) accuses Senegalese intellectuals of continuing to define themselves only in relation to the state. They thus failed to create and manage the instruments of a genuine autonomy that might have ensured a participatory involvement with society commensurate with its stature. The absence of independent publishing or distribution endowed with financial resources from non-governmental source, and the lack of research outfits with independent financial backing, also contributed to the atomisation of the intelligentsia.

And still others have decried the distance and oppositional stance of Africa intellectuals. Archie Mafeje (1997: 82) has suggested that the failure to join the political class may have something "to do with the self-image of African scholars in contrast to their Latin American counterparts, some of whom are part of the "political class"? He, unfortunately does not elaborate this point although one can interpret him as saying that if you have such strong views about some policy issue why do you not get into the political act.

However, the problem with the relationship with the state was not so much that of corruption or aloofness or even irrelevance but of an unrequited love for the Prince – the state – who African intellectuals generally felt constituted the major instrument for development and nation-building. Much of the distance between the African intellectual and the politician was not by choice. The instinctive position of the African intellectual was in some sense to be "organic" to the national movement and submit their intellectual values to the nationalist project. One has to periodise the relationship between the state and African intellectuals. In early years of independence, in the period of what I have termed the "First generation" the relationship between the state and intellectuals was good. In the words of Abdalla Bujra (Bujra 1994) this "was a remarkable period of general unity and agreement about both goals and means". In his turn Sadiq Rashid (1994) has characterised it "as a period of mutual tolerance and amicable co-operation between the academic community and the policy-making entities" and of "mutual accommodation and willful co-operation" when "views of academicians were solicited by the latter, while the former readily obliged and often took pride in being associated with the honour of contributing to the crafting of national policies and exposure to the lime light as a result thereof".

African academics were willing to submit themselves to the command of the nationalist and development state, which they viewed as "the custodian of the development process and the university an institution that must train human resources for development. It then seemed natural to us that the state play a key role in managing the university" (Mamdani 1993). But African states were apparently never in great need of such a social category and few African leaders bothered to curry favour with African intellectuals *qua* intellectuals.

### 3. Globalisation and Nation-building

From all accounts one of the major problems that Africa and intellectuals will have to address is globalisation. Globalisation refers to both the actual processes driven by trade, finance and technology and the ideological expressions of such processes. African intellectuals have usually had a healthy dose of scepticism about processes of integration of their countries into the world market, whether in earlier forms of neo-colonialism, trans-nationalisation or internationalisation or its new guise of globalisation. Quests for "endogenous" or "self-reliance" or "autocentric" development have been dismissed as either chauvinistic "nativism"



or unrealistic sloganeering, either as implying a complete break with globalisation or a return to some romantic past of "traditional institutions or knowledge. African scholars have also been accused of being closed in, just as their governments have been accused of running "inward-looking" closed economies. Attempts to create autonomous spaces for reflection have been dismissed as insular and provincial, and ultimately doomed to fail due to the ineluctable forces of globalisation. Visiting scholars are wont, like the Gypsies in a Garcia Marquez town in *Hundred Years of Solitude*, to inform us of new things taking place in the world out there. In order to keep up with the (global) Jones, we are enjoined to take up a much broader array of themes that reflect the cultural flux and interpenetration that globalisation entails – rap music, hair styles, new social movements, etc. Broadening our agenda is obviously a welcome thing if it does not mean losing our sense of priorities.

While it may be the case that some of this can rightly be given this interpretation, most writing has been a protest against the continued remote control of the development process by forces outside Africa or the occupation of the "driver's seat" by unlicensed foreigners whose knowledge of the terrain and even sobriety could be guaranteed – of the "dependence" of African economies. It is paradoxical that the "Dependence School" that was influential in African debates was declared dead at precisely the moment when African countries were entering a period of intense tutelage under foreign institutions. It is also remarkable that almost forty years after independence, donors now suggest that it might not be a bad idea at all for Africans to "own" policies of the development of their countries.

The greatest challenge to the nationalist project has been globalisation. Because it has been the site of so much suffering and oppression, there are some who see the demise of the African state as good news. They see globalisation as a welcome wind because it will sweep away our local potentates and the restrictive and suffocating order which they have imposed on Africa. Globalisation is then seen as ushering in an era of freedom – unlimited access to information and knowledge, multiple identities and infinite range of choices. This may be the ultimate promise of globalisation, and there is a new elite in Africa that has emerged in the wake of liberalisation and privatisation that may already begin to enjoy the fruits of this new order. However, the picture in Africa right now seems to be different. If globalisation is eroding the state, it is also unleashing murderous localisms that nationalism had so desperately sought to tame.

I have argued elsewhere (Mkandawire 1999) that

"how Africa goes global will be determined not only by the exogenous and putatively ineluctable forces of globalisation, but also by the degree of social cohesion countries can individually and collectively muster. It is this social cohesion that will determine and firm up the internal strategies necessary to make politically viable and legitimate whatever external strategies the countries choose. Failure to come up with adequate internal responses to the

external challenges will merely expose African countries to the process of "immiserising" globalisation"

I have suggested that both internal institutional and political weaknesses and the particular way Africa is being integrated into the global system are likely to lead to this undesirable outcome. The internal problems are the result, on the one hand, of internal inconsistencies and conflicts and what Africans themselves generally describe as "betrayal" by the leaders of the promise of independence, and, on the other, of the reverberations of foreign pressures on domestic politics, which may not only alter the preferences or ideologies of key actors, but also influence the social composition and strength of political coalitions.

Perhaps the most insidious effect of "global talk" has been at the ideological level where globalisation has been given a twist that has tended to denigrate national ideologies of social change and to underrate social policy. More specifically, the ideology has tended to suggest that notions of equity and social justice are either hopelessly old fashioned and "ideological" or simply doomed to be swept aside by the ineluctable force of globalisation. In this sense globalisation has either provided an excuse for those who would want to set aside the agenda for equity and justice, or has served to demoralise or disarm those who have sought to use national policies to address these issues. Even more significant is that policy makers at the national level are at great pains to conceal whatever egalitarian inclinations they might have had. One has simply seized talking about equity and poverty as this might scare "markets". The need to "signal" foreign capital further re-enforces the persuasiveness of this ideological posture. One should also add here the ideological shifts within the new leadership, which is putatively better attuned to "global talk" and thus much less encumbered by the populism that haunted its predecessors. Keen to gain an international reputation, they are much less inclined to appeal to their own people or listen to local intellectuals.

In recent years both nationalism and its main projects have fallen on hard times – betrayed by some of its heroes, undercut by international institutions and forces of globalisation, reviled and caricatured by academics and alien to a whole new generation of Africans born after independence. We must also remember that in defiance of the death foretold, nationalism in Africa and elsewhere is alive, an in the eyes of some incongruously and regrettably so. Some of the metamorphoses it has undergone makes it very far removed from the original version that people like Nyerere represented.

It is by revisiting issues of nation-building, pan-Africanism, development and democracy that we will be able to address the main issues that devastate the lives of so many of us – poverty, wars, repression. Obviously the premises and reasons for revisiting those issues need not be the same as those of the "founding fathers".

African intellectuals are today much freer than they ever have been since independence. The sullen silence of the 1980s was broken by the emergence of the movement for democratisation. It also marked a growing self-conscious-

ness of the intellectuals as a social group, with rights and responsibilities. Academics themselves had been quick to clamour for academic freedom (see for instance Diouf and Mamdani 1983 and especially the *Kampala Declaration on Academic Freedom*). Once again, we see African intellectuals adapting a self-consciously public position on national issues. But they work under incredible conditions. They are probably much less "organic" to the current project of re-integrating African economies through structural adjustment, dependent as it is, on global technocrats. African intellectuals have emerged from the debacle of authoritarian rule much less tarnished by involvement with the oppressor than, say, the Japanese intellectuals were with the fascist regime. They thus have the opportunity of moving away from a focus on the state to engage other social actors that have been unleashed by both the political and economic liberalisation. In a sense our "irrelevance" served our skins since we emerged from the debacle of the 1980s with our hands relatively clean, a fact demonstrated by the role given to intellectuals in national conventions and other democratic happenings of the 1990s.

However, there is a danger that one ought to avoid this time around. If an earlier generation of African scholars was stifled by the revolutionary oppositional gaze that refused to propose what was to be done before everything had been done, the new generation of African intellectuals run the risk of operating under the paralysing gaze of "post-colonial" pessimism which suggests that, everything being contingent, there are no more grounds for action.

It is obvious to me that the litmus test of any international order remains whether it facilitates economic development in Africa. I also believe that only those nations that "go global" in a socially cohesive manner will reap whatever benefits globalisation holds. In an earlier lecture, I concluded with the following: "globalisation everywhere provokes particularistic responses which take many forms. There are at least two possible *wrong* ways of reacting to globalisation: one can either escape into xenophobic 'fundamentalism' or 'nativist' positions or engage in blind celebration of the 'universal' by an uncritical embrace of globalisation. These reactions would constitute two ways of being lost. ... And both responses are, alas, not absent in Africa. It is my view that the reformist impulses of the nationalist agenda, revamped to reflect the changed times, constitute a useful point of departure in dealing with globalisation. The fate of Africa lies in a collective rethinking of that continent's unfulfilled humanistic tasks in light of what has transpired, and the concrete situation today, so as to recast them into cornerstones of social justice, solidarity and equality and to enable the continent to reconnect with the rest of world in a mutually beneficial way. We need many more creative institutional designs to respond to the peculiarities of Africa's social pluralism. We may, in the process, have to rethink the attributes of a nation-state in Africa – in terms of cultural basis and territorial exclusivity – in order to give greater authority to regional arrangements and to strengthen regional self-policing." (Mkandawire 1999)

The turn away from the market frenzy brings us back to the question of the state and development. The challenge for Africa will be to establish developmental states that are firmly and democratically embedded in their own societies and that are competent to engage the world and respond to the exigencies of the emerging global order. Such a process is inherently knowledge intensive. The African intellectual must continue to be, in the words of Soyinka (1976), an "author of the language that tries to speak truth to power". One can only hope that this time around both state and society will realise that an unfettered intellectual class is an emancipatory force that can be put to good use.

### Abstracts

*In historischer Perspektive werden die nachkolonialen Generationen afrikanischer Intellektueller und ihre Diskurse in den Sozialwissenschaftlichen Zusammenfassend vorgestellt. Die Position dieser Akademiker gegenüber staatlicher Autorität und ihre Rolle im Prozess der Nationbildung und Demokratisierung werden einzuordnen versucht. Afrikanische Intellektuelle sind heutzutage freier als jemals zuvor seit der Unabhängigkeit. Aber Staat und Gesellschaft müssen noch immer erkennen lernen, dass Intellektuelle einen nützlichen emanzipatorischen Faktor im Zuge künftiger Entwicklung darstellen.*

*Generations of African intellectuals and their discourses during the post-colonial development of African social sciences are introduced and summarised in retrospective. The positioning of these academics vis-à-vis the state authority, their role in nation building and democratisation are reflected. It is concluded that African intellectuals today are freer than ever since the independences of their countries. But state and society still have to realise that intellectuals offer an useful emancipatory force contributing towards further development.*

### Notes

- 1 There has been considerable amount of soul-searching on the "impasse" of development. Much of this is written from the perspectives of the "development industry" and aid establishment abroad. African thinking and intellectual mood are rarely considered in such debates. For some of the interesting readings on this see (Booth 1994; Munck 1986; Schuurman 1993). Some have of course so far as to declare development studies "dead", and have proceeded to a "post-development" phase (see for instance (Rahnema/Bawtree 1997; Sachs 1992).
- 2 This has been done by looking for both internal and external reasons for the failure. Contrary to the caricature of the African discourse, it has never been exclusively internalist in its critique. African writers began complaining about problems of corruption, waste and mismanagement long before it became fashionable in the donor community to talk about these things.
- 3 Claude Ake who had earlier accused African leaders of "developmentalism" ended up arguing that "the problem is not so much that development has failed as that it was never really on the agenda" (Ake 1996), a position Archie Mafeje (1997) believes can be challenged for being an "overstatement".

- 4 Leopold Senghor tried after the 1968 student revolt. The state launched a programme of intellectual recruitment to recover the lost space. The Nation and development Club, open to people outside the ruling party, was set up. Mamdou Diouf notes that in the view of the new generation of ruling party intellectuals, "the key failing of the post-colonial compromise was its reliance on 'the politics of mere politicians'. Their proffered solution was the creation of a new legitimacy on the basis of technocratic nationalism" (Diouf 1993).
- 5 Now, Mr. Ayitteh has been closely associated with some of the most rabidly right wing think tanks in the USA and is likely to be hostile to African intellectuals for their largely progressive and humanistic position.

## Literature

- Africa Watch. 1991. *Academic Freedom and Human Rights Abuses in Africa*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Ake, C. 1979. "Ideology and Objective Conditions". In: Barkan, J., Okumu, J. eds. *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- Ake, C. 1996. *Democracy and Development in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.
- Appiah, K. A. 1992. *My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. London: Methuen.
- Ayittey. 1996. "No Tears for Africa's Intellectuals". *New Africa*.
- Bangura, Y. 1994. *Intellectuals, Economic Reform and Social Change: Constraints and Opportunities in the Formations of a Nigerian Technocracy*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Booth, D. 1994. *Rethinking Social Development: Theory, Research and Practice*. London: Longman.
- Bujira, A. 1994. "Whither Social Institutions in Africa: A prognosis". *Africa Development*, XIX, 1: 119-166.
- CODESRIA. 1996. "The State of Academic Freedom in Africa". In: CODESRIA. ed. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Copans, J. 1994. "Intellectuels visible, intellectuels invisible". *Politique Africaine*.
- Diaw, A. 1993. "Democracy of the Literati". In: Diop, M. ed. *Senegal: Essays in Statecraft*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Diouf, M. 1993. "Beyond Patronage and Technocracy". In: Diop, M., ed. *Senegal: Essays in Statecraft*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Diouf, M., Mamdani, M. 1983. *Academic Freedom in Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Mafeje, A. 1993. "African Intellectuals: An Inquiry into their Genesis and Social Options". In: Diouf, M., Mamdani, eds. *Academic Freedom in Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Mamdani, M. 1993. "University Crisis and reform: A Reflection on the African Experience". *Review of African Political Economy*, 58, 7.
- Mkandawire, T. 1996. "The State, Human Rights and Academic Freedom". In: Turner, J. D. ed. *The State and the School: An International Perspective*. London: Palmer Press.
- Mkandawire, T. 1998. "The Social Sciences in Africa: Breaking Local Barriers and Negotiating International Presence". In: Marcussen, H. S., S. Arnfred, S. eds. *Concepts and Metaphors: Ideologies, Narratives and Myths in Development Discourse*. Roskilde: Roskilde University.
- Mkandawire, T. 1999. "Globalisation and Africa's Unfinished Agenda". *Macalaster International Review*, 7, 21-107.
- Munck, R. 1986. *The Difficult Dialogue: Marxism and Nationalism*. London.
- Rahnema, M., V. Bawtree. 1997. *The Post-Development Reader*. London: Zed Books.
- Sachs, W. 1992. *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge and Power*. London: Zed Books.

- Schuurman, F. 1993. *Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in Development Theory*. London: Zed Books.
- Shivji, I. 1980. "The State in the Dominated Social Formations of Africa: Some Theoretical Issues". *International Social Science Journal*, XXXII, 4, 730-742.
- Soyinka, W. 1976. *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Takaki, R. 1995. "Culture Wars in the United States: Closing Reflections on the Century of the Color Line". In: Pieterse, J. N., B. Pakesh. eds. *The Decolonisation of the Imagination: Culture, Knowledge and Power*. London: Zed Books.
- Verhaegen, B. 1995. "The African University: Evaluation and Perspectives". In: Mudimbe, E. ed. *The Surreptitious Speech: Présence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness - 1947-1997*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago.
- Zezeza, P. T. 1997. "The Struggle for the University". *Africa Development*, xxii, 2: 181-192.

Thandika Mkandawire, United Nations Research Institute für Social Development (UNRISD), Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  
e-mail: mkandawire@unrisd.org