Africa Multiple

Africa*n Relations.

Modalities Reflected

Clarissa Vierke and Rüdiger Seesemann, 2024

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Our key concepts are *multiplicity, relationality,* and *reflexivity.* We employ them to capture the dynamic interrelationship of diversity and entanglement that characterize African and African diasporic ways of life and world-making. In the "Knowledge Lab", we connect our theoretical, epistemological, and methodological issues. Our "Digital Research Environment" integrates analogue and digital data into a common, digital research platform. Through the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, the Cluster coordinates an international fellowship programme for junior and senior researchers, including artists. Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) offers research-oriented training for doctoral students.

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Africa*n Relations: Modalities Reflected

Introduction

Rüdiger Seesemann and Clarissa Vierke

> "Modalities seems to me a very powerful tool for studying Africa as multiple and relational, reflexive. (…) It moves away from the binary in the history of philosophy of substance, a singular, and modes in the plural, so that the substance presents itself under different modes. Spinoza differentiates between the substance, which is God, and modes like the body or the spirit. Modality deconstructs it, but puts the only emphasis on different manners, reflections, modes which do not point to the oneness of substance. Modalities have a mode of being on their own."

This is the response the Senegalese philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne gave, when the dean of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, Rüdiger Seesemann, asked him about the analytical value of "modalities" in the concluding session of the Cluster conference "Africa*n Relations. Modalities Reflected".[1] Indeed, our consideration of modalities of relating in the Africa Multiple Cluster is fundamentally connected to the triad we have advanced as the conceptual framework for our research: Multiplicity as constituted by relationality and reflexivity. With the notion of multiplicity, we move away from the idea of Africa as a neatly delineated and definable area, a substance, in Diagne's words, mostly invented by the West and fixed in time and space, which has

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so long troubled African studies and area studies more broadly. Instead, we propose to conceptualize 'Africa' as multiple, which implies that we do not approach Africa as an isolate or fixed unit, but as constantly and dynamically constituted and reconstituted through *relations*. To quote Diagne once again:

> "If we take modalities seriously, we need to consider modes of relating in themselves without reducing them to the one – Glissant talks about the primacy of relation. The rhizome offers another concept of tiny roots, without having a center or one root (…). Modalities is a way of thinking about the multiple realities of Africa, an Africa in flux with urban intensifications. (…) If you do not have an overarching vertical universal, you have a horizontal plane of immanence. This is a way of escaping the invention of Africa (as Mudimbe put it), by not imposing an overarching universalism, considering Africa as a substance. There is no language which represents the logos, but there are only different modalities – no *Ursprache* of which everything else is a mode. (…) There are only modalities and the language of languages is translation."[2]

Multiplicity is not a synonym of diversity, and it goes beyond underlining Africa's (often stereotypically evoked) plurality. From the point of view of multiplicity, there is, for instance, not a super-category (or substance) of literature, like the novel, and many national adaptations of the novel on the African continent just derived from it as variations. So far, however, the narrative – which has troubled literary studies as much as many other disciplines – has largely remained a teleological one of Western origin (or at least, standard of measure) and African variations of it, which always come belatedly. Diagne points to the example of Islam in Africa, which is often considered as a localized version of "Arab Islam"[3]. He refers to a quote attributed to Tierno Bokar Saalif Tall, a Sufi scholar from present day Mali of the early 20th century, who compared Islam to water, which does not have a colour of its own, but takes on the colour of the landscape through which it is runs.[4] "You do not have Islam as a substance", Diagne concludes, "you only have modalities of Islam". As the anthropologist Marylin Strathern puts it in her reflections about relations, a multiple world made up of relations cannot be dissected into "the one and the many" (Strathern 1991)[5]. Seen from this perspective, the dichotomy of centre and periphery is dissolved: what remains are only peripheries – or only modalities.

Sticking to the "plane of immanence", relationality stays with the fuzzy and dynamic nature of lifeworlds, embedded in multiple relations and attuned to the coming into being of, for instance, literary works, religious practices as well as the simultaneity of many coexisting phenomena, different ways of being in and acting in the world, and options, which might also be contradictory, contested, and incommensurable. Since relations also feed back into the context from where they

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[2] Again this quote is taken from the videorecording of the same concluding session of the conference. The dictum "the language of all languages is translation" is borrowed from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (see wa Thiong'o 2023). Diagne has also written recurrently about the question of universalism (see, for instance, Diagne 2022).

[3] See also Spies and Seesemann 2016; Seesemann 2020.

[4] In the words of Amadou Hampate Ba, Tierno Bokar's most prominent student: "L'Islam n'a plus de couleur de l'eau: il se colore aux teintes de terroirs et des pierres" (as quoted in Monteil 1964: 41).

[5] See also Strathern (2018: 3): "(…) nothing is simply part of a whole insofar as another view or perspective may redescribe it as part of something else."

come, reflexivity is the second analytical tool for considering multiplicity, entailing also a critical view on researchers' positionalities: Researchers embedded in power structures shape their 'object' of research and vice versa. This also implies that this approach is susceptible of questions of power, processes of border-drawing and exclusion, which we will come back to below.[6]

Conceptually, the research agenda takes inspiration from a variety of disciplines and debates, like science and technology studies, cultural studies and theories of new materialism, which seek to leave behind monist, reductionist entities – in Diagne's words, the idea of a "substance" – as elementary considerations of research, and foreground relations instead. Echoing the sociologist Christopher Powell, whose "radical relationality" advocates giving up dichotomies of the individual and society, structure and agency (2013: 191), we consider African lifeworlds as configurations of relations. Whether on larger or smaller scales, relations allow us to see Africa as globally entangled and as co-constituting a dynamic world in constant flux. The focus on relations entails a perspective that foregrounds processes. In his book *Poetics of Relations*, Edouard Glissant (1996) inflects relations not as "being in relation" or "having relations", but essentially as a constant process of becoming; he speaks of "coming into relation" in specific moments and contexts as key points. Similarly, Powell also underlines, in drawing on Elias, that relations "are only directly observable through concrete action" (2013: 194).[7]

While a perspective of "coming into relation", and hence on processes, emergences and transformation is a common denominator, views differ particularly concerning the ontological status of relations, their conceptualization, as well as, more specifically, the human-non-human boundaries.[8] From a constructivist (relativist) point of view, it is the object under investigation which changes depending on the observer's standpoint as well as the conceptual lens taken: There are many versions of, for instance, religious practice, political formations or art history (see Philipps and Gillier in the present volume). While there is a diversity or plurality of gazes and perspectives that question single narratives, which exclude others, it is the phenomenon under investigation whose ontological status remains unquestioned: it "remains singular, intangible and untouched" (Mol 1999: 76). Translating this perspective into Diagne's terminology, one could say that the object is a substance that appears in various modes depending on the observer. However, as Diagne emphasises in his quote above, from an ontological perspective on multiplicity there is no such thing as one object, but only different versions or modalities of it, which are constantly being shaped, performed and changed (see also Akin-Otiko in the present volume).

For Annemarie Mol, the case for ontological multiplicity is supported by the fact that reality is "historically, culturally and materially located" (Mol 1999: 75; Mol 2000, see also Haraway 2003). Object and subject, matter and human cannot easily be differentiated as the observer and the observed. A good example is the laboratory, Bruno Latour's paradigmatic site for developing his actor-network theory, which most approaches in new materialism draw on: Laboratory products, like microchips, telephones, or vaccinations, "carry new realities with them", which then figure as

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[6] On that, see also in particular the contribution by Philipps and Gillier and Kinyera and Doevenspeck in this special issue.

[7] For Massumi (2002), movement and moments of emergence are key; Mol (1999: 75) underlines performance and intervention.

[8] From this point of view, even stasis is the product of constantly renovated relations and just a special case of becoming.

"historically grounded contingencies" (Mol 1999: 75). To give another example, as highlighted by Achille Mbembe, borders are decisively linked with the racialisation of human bodies, advanced through biometrics, allowing some to pass and others not to pass: "The human body is seen as an indisputable anchor to which data be safely secured" (Mbembe 2019: 5). It is a perspective of actor-network theory and subsequent inquiries of new materialism which (analytically) diminishes the distinction between the material and immaterial, semiotic, physical and social forces. Rather, emphasis is put on constant interactions and interrelations, making human and matter actants and co-equal, constantly reshaping each other.[9]

These considerations feed into or overlap with a variety of conceptualizations of relationality, like networks (Latour 2005), assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 2015) or enmeshments (Mol and Law 1994). Not only the philosopher Brian Massumi but also scholars such as Tim Ingold (2007: 80, 2011: 85) have built on but also criticized Latour's ANT for translating life into a series of interconnected and well-defined nodes, rather than linear trails. Massumi compares it to a flying arrow, whose flow can only artificially and in retrospect be segmented into nodes along the flying curve (see Massumi 2002: 6). The impossible question at which point one can grasp the arrow's trajectory (a point can never picture movement) reminds us of Mol's finding that many conditions are contingent and hence difficult to be traced and grasped in one single moment (Mol 2010). Ingold's concept of the meshwork (based on the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre) is "not so much nodes in a network as knots in a tissue of knots" (Ingold 2011: 71).[10] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's metaphor of the rhizome is also an organic one, where relationality between humans and matter is not tied by nodes but grows, horizontally, along tiny roots (Deleuze and Guattari 2015).

Even if one does not subscribe to a radical ontogenetic view on relations, a focus on modes and modalities comes in as a logical consequence of putting an emphasis on multiplicity refracted through the lens of relationality. Because relations sidestep defined terms and structure and are tied to movement and change, they suggest an empirical approach, zeroing in on moments of becoming – which is also the focus of the contributions to the present collection. The question is how to analyze and, hence, also qualify modes of relations, as they emerge, stagnate, continue, or overlap. Moving towards practices, appearances, and emergences, mostly (transitive and inchoative) verbs rather than nouns are being used. In the context of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, we use modalities as one of our heuristic angles, together with medialities, spatialities, and temporalities, meant to structure the study of relations. Examining modes of relating is first of all an empirical question with the aim to collect, systematize, and structure the variety of empirically observed processes of relating, like exchange, acceptance, adaptation, affiliation, inclusion, cooperation, (mutual) influence, convergence, dependence, hierarchization,

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[9] More recently, it is the COVID-19 pandemic but also climate change which have increasingly underpinned what Mbembe, arguing from a political perspective, calls "planetary" view beyond human-centrism: In his lecture "Bodies as Borders. The Right to Mobility in a Planetary Age" (2019), he is not only worried about how to "repair" the planet so much "damaged by human activities", but wonders how to "reassemble" the "humans and non-humans, its physical, chemical and biological components, its oceans, atmosphere and land surface, all interlinked in a grand gesture of mutuality". In the present volume, Kinyera and Doevenspeck describe the "reassemblement" of communities, state and company representatives, different notions of land and oil pipelines.

[10] See Lefebvre 1991: 117.

competition, conflict, struggle, rejection, resistance, opposition, and denial (see also Spies and Seesemann 2016).

Rather than thinking of relations merely as alternative options or as successively coming into being in a narrative of progress, multiplicity takes particular interest in their simultaneity, interplay and historical entanglement: how do possible options enforce or exclude each other? how do they overlap? How are they being defended, argued for, or attacked (see also Spies and Seesemann 2016: 6)? Modalities urges us to not only reflect on the situatedness of the historical, social and material conditions of coming into relation, but also to consider their outcomes, which are never stable: Which multiple versions of reality constantly emerge through and in relations? And which future versions do they make way for or hinder?

Furthermore, how can we qualify the properties of relations? Also depending on the researcher's perspective and conceptual take, they might appear as imagined, symbolic, conceptual, personal, physical, embodied, material, or affective; they might also be direct, indirect, concrete, actual, potential, historical, present or future-oriented; they might be enduring or also brief. A particular challenge, circumscribed by the range of adjectives listed, lies in the often rather fuzzy nature of modes of relations as such (which makes it often impossible to opt for one descriptive adjective). Rather than thinking of modes of relations as well-circumscribed and definable, they appear fragmented, ambiguous, partial or discontinuous: processes that clash or stagnate in one context might produce collaborations and acceptance elsewhere, possibly producing collateral effects. Rather than modes of relations adding up to a well-defined harmonious whole (a substance in Diagne's terms), "tolerating open-endedness, facing tragic dilemmas, and living-in-tension sound more like it" (Mol 1999: 83). Mol gives the example of "side-effects" in the various ways of diagnosing anemia, like for instance, a categorization of sexes due to statistics, which was not the intention of the originally planned tools for diagnoses, but still has very concrete effects (see also Mol 2010). Modes and qualities of relations are not merely alternatives to each other. There are not only many relations, but they also interfere, overlap or include one another in complex ways.[11]

Emphasising processes of emerging necessitates a view on the becoming and hence the "not-yet defined", including tacit, potential, latent, embodied, affective and sensuous modes, which defy easy categorization and terms: there is no name for it yet in the moment when something happens.[12] For Massumi's approach, for instance, affect and sensation are key categories. For him, the "becoming sensible" (Massumi 2002: 77) of change, rupture and deviation, "processes before signification and coding" are essential, since terms of sociality, culture but also space are not fixed terms which precede bodily and sensuous experience, but, the other way around, experiences are only categorized in social, cultural and spatial terms in retrospect (Massumi 2002; see also Žižek 2006, Ingold 2011). Modes of experience precede language and concepts.[13]

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[11] This is exactly the reason why Mol criticizes Latour's notion of network as well-defined nodes.

[12] The sensuous perception, embodied experiences and affect have also been widely debated in cultural philosophy, cultural studies and anthropology.

[13] In this collection, the aspect of latent emergence preceding language and concepts is discussed by Philipps and Gillier, who compare the way photography and sociology 'know'.

In a similar vein, Ute Fendler, with reference to the philosopher and artist Erin Manning, underlines dance as a relational practice, which creates an "in-between", an "interval", a "third space" that comes with new, emergent sensations, breaking with established codes and thus bringing about a reality in the making (Fendler 2021, see Manning 2013: 2). Giving prominence to the material world that defies a reduction into discourse and language, affective, tacit and sensuous, aesthetic modes (which also challenge the analytical language of the scholar), have played an important role in strands of cultural philosophy, particularly in relational approaches to arts, which highlight their specific quality, of creating. Glissant, in his *Poetics of Relations*, calls them "opaque" relations.[14] Creole poetry, like the "composite culture" of the French Antilles, drawing on a variety of cultural influences, cannot be dissected into parts, but presents a relational "composite" full of tensions, made of a multitude of cultural layers, which both hide and reveal a view on a *totalité-monde*, a totality of world (Glissant 1997: 22). Glissant celebrates the notion of errantry, which he opposes to the arrow-like trajectory of expansion and domination. Errantry is for him the approach to a *totalité-monde*, best exemplified by the culture of the French Antilles, which resists categorizations: "In the poetics of relation, one who is errant (who is no longer traveler, discoverer, or conqueror) strives to know the totality of the world yet already knows he will never accomplish this – and knows that is precisely where the threatened beauty of the world resides" (1996: 20).

Drawing on Deleuze (1983), Michaela Ott (2018) has explored the concept of dividuality to examine composite modalities of artworks, like film but also visual art, which participate in a globalized aesthetic sphere using an increasingly globalized but also fragmented language, incessantly recombining as well as transforming aesthetic elements in new reconfigurations of relations.[15] Similar to Glissant's *totalité-monde*, which resists generalizations and can blow off like a bomb, awakening the dormant consciousness, these reconfigurations are not apolitical: Questioning a didactic and representational function of the arts, acting as a sheer mirror image of society, Deleuze and Guattari (1994) underline the way art, like, for instance, cinema, but also painting or music, through their concrete form of images, sounds and their fictions create "sensible intensities" (Ritzer 2018: 23), which unsettle established categories. They are political in the sense that they make alternative existences perceptible, since as politics concerns itself with what can be seen and what can be said (see also Rancière 2004). So the arts render an alternative perceptible before it can be conceptualized and categorized in words (see Fendler et al. forthcoming).[16]

It lies in the nature of modes of relations that they do not imply equality or solidarity: They are rarely egalitarian and harmonious, but always situated within and imbued with power structures (Powell 2013). As Mbembe reminds us, global entanglement, spurred by "technological

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[14] One cannot possibly summarize a poem, a painting or a dance without losing its exact quality as a poem, a painting or a dance.

[15] Gilles Deleuze (1983: 140) characterizes film and music as dividual expressions, since they are based on temporal processes and therefore incessantly recombining and transforming their aesthetic elements while nevertheless providing a singular expression.

[16] In the present volume, the arts as modes of relations are well-represented, starting with the artist's essay by Yvonne Owuor, who reimagines Africa through narratives. Peter Simatei shows how literature shapes worlds, and Babacar Diop focuses on Senghor's vision of reinventing Africa and the world through the arts.

escalation", together with an all engulfing "fast capitalism" driven mostly by private high-tech corporates, (see also Kinyera and Doevenspeck in this volume), on the one hand, also means, on the other hand, the drawing of increasingly rigid boundaries and borders, manifested, for instance, in tracking devices and the enforcement of wide range of coercive modes: "The drive is simultaneously and decisively towards contraction, towards containment, towards enclosure and various forms of encampment, detention and incarceration" (Mbembe 2019: 4). Glissant (1996: 104) also highlights "the relationship of domination", which he sees residing in "technological expansion" as well as "generalizing a neutral uniformity". It is the search for the universal – here a universal language (see Diagne's reference to the logos) – which comes with violent modes of exclusion (see also Diagne 2022).[17] The latter translate into technological modes of confinement, as Mbembe put it, in which both politics, but also forms of knowledge production in science and scholarship are complicit. To give another example, M'charek, Schramm and Skinner (2014) interrogate race, "itself a multiple absent-present slippery 'object' in Europe", which is sometimes relegated to the past, sometimes considered a biological, sometimes a physical category, "coming in many guises". It is the interplay of science, technology, values as well as specifically situated "historical and political trajectories" that turn race into an identifiable category of concern (M'charek, Schramm and Skinner 2014: 460).

Therefore, the heuristic angle of modalities is fundamentally interlinked with the Africa Multiple Cluster's key concept of reflexivity, which requires the researchers to reflect upon the relational modalities of their position and the very conditions of their knowledge production, because there can never be the position of an external observer relationally disconnected from the world.[18] Reflexivity urges us, firstly, to take the repetitive loop effects of relations into consideration, feeding back into the discourse and context they emerge from: the 'emic' and 'etic' standpoint are an illusion of a binary perspective. Acknowledging the situatedness of all relations also means to examine the ways in which researchers are implicated in the shaping of relational modes. Thinking about the interrelation of overt or tacit modes of dominance, in intersectional approaches, developed to uncover the overlapping and simultaneous structures of oppression, come in as a conceptual tool (Crenshaw 1991). Under these conditions, the question of how modes of cooperation and solidarity are possible becomes the more pertinent.

As already pointed out, the contribution to this special issue approach the notion of modalities of relations in different ways both in terms of concepts and approaches but also in terms of disciplines.

It starts with an essay by the Kenyan writer **Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor** based on her artist lecture given during the "Africa*n Relations" conference in July 2020. She critically reflects on the nexus of African Studies, the African continent and the modes of knowledge production about Africa in a postpandemic and fast-changing world. In what Owuor calls the "liminal season of humanity" where the humanity of the 'other' is still denied, on the one hand, but, on the other, global interconnectedness is most evident, the question of what knowledge Africanists produce and for whom is most pertinent. Rather than continuing to foster an existential boredom-–*ennui*—

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[17] It is the universal vision of art by Senghor discussed by Diop in this volume, which, in a very different way, comes with an inviting gesture.

[18] See the harsh criticism of knowledge production in African Studies by Yvonne Owuor in the present volume.

incapable to think a different world, she sees the present global crises as a chance for Africa to reimagine its futures, rethink its options, taking its own responsibility as well as forging new solidarities across the continent and the Global South. Her emphasis on thinking creatively is reminiscent of her literary work: As a novelist, Yvonne Owuor has written alternative presents, futures and pasts into being. She has given life to Kenya's entangled histories of long durée beyond the national and the colonial period. Thus, one can read her essay alongside her literary work as an exercise of thinking modes of relations differently. Evoking African narrative creativity, one can read her as referring to relationality as a decolonial approach, as defined by Catherine Walsh and Walter Mingolo (2018: 14), who consider it as referring to "ways that different local histories and embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality, including our own, can enter into conversations and build understandings that both cross geopolitical locations and colonial differences, and contest the totalizing claims and political-epistemic violence of modernity."

In their contribution "Modalities of Theorizing", the sociologist **Joschka Philipps** and the photographer **Aurélien Gillier** also engage with modalities as a question of knowledge production, including a discussion of the particular way the arts—in this case photography—'know'. Focusing on conspiracy theories in Guinea, they engage in a dialogue on the 'modes of knowing' of the photographer in contrast to the sociologist. It is what Gillier calls the "openness" of the photographic approach – reminiscent of the tacit, latent or sensuous modes referred to above – that renders a complexity sensible, without translating the "opacity" of the "totality of world" (Glissant 1996) into propositional language. The formulation of concepts, the work of the sociologists, does not precede the photograph, which does more than illustrate a concept. It is revelatory in opening new fields of imagination, making palpable the "not-yet" rather than giving form to the already understood. The contingency, which we underlined before as a quality of relations constantly in the mode of becoming, seems to be best captured by photography. However, as Philipps and Gillier argue, concepts do not merely disambiguate and clarify, but are relational as well, because they depend on the "modalities of researching and theorizing", which "are always partial": "They structure not only what we see in the world, but also what we ignore and what remains unknown to us". The authors, for whom modalities emphasize the partial nature of all epistemological approaches, contrast 'conspiracy theory' and 'sociological theory', which have been often defined in binary terms. They gradually deconstruct the opposition by referring to the example of Guinea, where the everyday sense-making of a political arena largely defined by parapolitical actors necessarily involves speculation. The 'universal' of conspiracy is hard to be grasped empirically, in contrast to local terms and practices whose situatedness the authors follow by pursuing a biographical approach. Echoing Diagne's point that modes do away with substance, Philipps and Gillier use modalities to refer to the various – always partial –perspectives taken, depending on the medium as well as the theoretical approach, whereby the boundaries between sociological and conspiracy theory become fuzzy.

Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko, renowned for his research on traditional African medicine, also examines the relation between two different 'theories', in this case medicine based on Western positivist notions of health and sickness and Yoruba traditional medicine, whose relation is often constructed in terms of dichotomies. Through ethnographic fieldwork, he accompanied patients with somatoform disorders through the process of receiving conflicting diagnoses and treatments in hospitals and later by diviners. As it becomes clear, the reasons given for sicknesses by the diviners consider a whole range of courses – from breaking taboos to being the victim of witchcraft

or a bad spirit – not considered in the context of the context of the hospital. Akin-Otiko argues for an integrative medicine that allows for a variety of treatments based on different epistemologies – and, as one might add, ontologies. Here, it is pertinent to note once more with reference to Diagne that the sickness and its symptoms are not a substance. They are not a universal given with a single firm ontological grounding, but rather emerge in a variety of etiologies and medical terms, hence in a wide range of social and spiritual orders, and hence in different ontologies. Thus, Akin-Otiko does not only offer a case of medical pluralism, but also an actual illustration of multiplicity. What is at stake is not a diversity of interpretations of a single phenomenon – i.e., the sickness – but rather a multiplicity of sicknesses, emerging in variable relations.

The literary studies scholar **Peter Simatei** examines literature and its modes of knowledge creation. In his contribution "Ways of Knowing Africa. African Literature and Shifting Imaginary", he traces the dynamic history of postcolonial African literature and its changing modes of relating and creating shifting worlds, focussing on the relation between literature and world. Similar to the approach Philipps and Gillier take to photography, Simatei underlines the specific quality of literature to not merely mirror or document "African realities" as they precede the literary mode. Rather, through their specific voices, multifaceted narratives, the interplay of various aesthetic traditions and the play with allusions and imagery, literary works co-constitute and imagine worlds yet to materialize, bringing to life alternative histories for crafting new perspectives on African modes of the self. Sketching out a historical perspective and starting with the first generation of African writers, like Chinua Achebe, Simatei shows how literature was given a prime role in rewriting Africa's history. Reclaiming history was a literary intervention meant to map out "a unique politico-cultural consciousness as part of a larger project of liberating the African person from the debilitating conditions created by colonialism", as he posits. The postcolonial novel is itself a product of complex relations: It is an outcome of the colonial and later independent nation state, on the one hand, and becomes a tool of resistance, on the other, constructing worlds in relation, namely in dialectical opposition to the values of the colonizer and later the oppressing ruling class. This construction, however, has neither been simply stable, nor has the constructed world remained inert. As Simatei goes on to show, the nation and the search for roots and origins became contested by later generations of writers, who sought to address their cosmopolitan, transnational, and diasporic identities. In the last part of his contribution, he turns to the example of Asian diasporic writers in East African, whose biographies and narratives often span three continents, India, Africa, and – depending on where they migrated to – North America, the UK or Europe, constantly negotiating flexible identities outside of the exclusionary framework of the nation. It is their "multi-positionality", sometimes also consciously claiming East African roots in the context of the 'new' diaspora, which emphasizes the constantly flexible relational creation of the multiple worlds in which Africa is entangled.

In their contribution "Consentient Citizenship and the making of Infrastructural Frontiers in East Africa", the geographers **Paddy Kinyera and Martin Doevenspeck** analyze dynamic multimodal – socially, economically, politically and materially grounded – relations as they play out in the context of the introduction of transnational mega infrastructures in East Africa. They present two examples: first, Kenya's Lamu-Port-South-Sudan Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET), a corridor project that seeks to link the newly built port on the Kenyan coast with South Sudan through railways, highways, airports for freight handling and pipelines for oil, and second, Uganda's East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), which covers a distance of over 1,400 kilometers and takes

the oil to the Tanzanian port of Tanga. Both projects bring the states, cooperates, and local communities in hitherto remote and hardly connected areas into new and dynamic modes of relation that are characterized by tremendous power imbalances. High capitalist hopes and narratives of an economic boost driven by oil and easier, far-distance transport clash with local communities' fears of being disenfranchised. Dispossession, compensation, and displacement, which are part of the process of land acquisition required by the infrastructures, constitute an existential threat to already marginalized local communities, whereas other local actors next to the multinational companies and the state see them as huge opportunities. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, the authors contrast these views. Notions of pushing a frontier into so far unproductive and hence 'empty' areas are not easily reconcilable with local view of land, which do not perceive the areas as 'empty'. Notions like the communally owned land in the Turkana area, do not match with the principles of recompensation schemes that typically consider individual owners. Such different understandings complicate negotiations – as much as individual desires, ignorance, lack of transparency and mistrust do. Kinyera and Doevenspeck describe the variety of strategies used to reach consensus and allow participation, showing how cooperate citizenship is constantly constructed in modes of dynamic power-laden relations.

The contribution by the philosopher **Babacar Mbaye Diop** highlights Africa not as a neatly defined area or substance, but constantly and actively shaped by relation-making. He traces the captivating case of Senghor's cultural politics and his vision of shaping Africa's new self-understanding through the arts that found a home in the Musée Dynamique, inaugurated in Dakar in 1966. Starting off with the *Premier festival mondial des arts nègres*, which brought together contemporary and traditional African art from 28 countries, Senghor's vision was to create an internationally visible platform for the arts founded on the principles of *négritude*. His aim was not to reinvent Africa along the lines of Panafrican relations or within the confines of national borders only: Senghor had a global and universal ambition seeking to create a dialogue with modernist artists from Europe and making Dakar a center of new networks. The already famous modernist artists, like Picasso, Chagall and Soulages, were invited to exhibit their artwork in later solo exhibitions in Dakar, where the works of contemporary African artists were also displayed with increasing frequency. Diop refers to Senghor's writings to examine his arguments for a universal notion of art founded on the principles of *négritude*. It is "art nègre", the masques in the museums of Paris, which greatly inspired Picasso and allowed him to not only change his style, but also his "way of seeing reality", as Senghor observed. However, as Diop shows, making art a prime concern of the state and tying it to the ideas of *négritude* was met with criticism from Senegalese artists – such as the group Agit'Art – already in the 1970s. Nonetheless, aspects of Senghor's vision – particularly the translatability of African "traditional" artwork, as Diop points out with reference to Souleymane Bachir Diagne's– can still inspire current discussions about restitution.

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Thresholds, Ennui, Futures & Alt. Decoloniality

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor

Hello there everybody. In these odd days of shifting world spirits, I guess it is only human to ask: Are you well? Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the tragedy of the floods here in Germany, and will express my sympathy to those affected. Applying lessons from the pandemic; which is to be gently aware of, and to always seek to be tender about human woundedness, and suffering. We are as beautifully ephemeral as fireflies—aren't we?

Back to the paper: I had sent an abstract to Professor Vierke having scratched it out on a piece of paper, and then copied it out onto my phone while climbing one of the montane forest hills I was on, to wait for a signal and then hit the send button. Returning from that journey weeks later, I looked again at what I had submitted to Clarissa. The montane forests I was in are in the Loita Hills, where pure oxygen flows. I reread everything and concluded that I had been high—no pun is intended. I spent the next hours clutching my head as I read the abstract. In the morning of my post-mountain descent, regret I wrote to Clarissa to tell her that I had recanted. That plea, sent from one of the airport lounges between Nairobi and Berlin got lost. It meant that it was too late to offload myself from what I had committed to.

Coincidentally I had also been sent off to Leukerbad in Switzerland. More high mountains, and it is there that I prepared this 'interpretation', and in the process realised that this topic comes at the right time, whether by intent or coincidence, one cannot tell. In simple words—it becomes one of the many new forms of enquiry erupting out of our pandemic-wearied world, the questioning of imagined realities given what we all now know, feel, sense and understand.

So much that was habit and imagined as tradition—like going to work from 9 to 5, has crumbled, so many former employees have discovered, to their surprise, that they are human beings whose greatest and most precious asset is time, for example, and that in a wired world they can work from home or from the beach in Diani, South Coast.

I sense that the long season of the pandemic has driven us all to a threshold where we are compelled to look again at human keystone questions:

- ◼ What does it now mean for us to be human? After the pandemic?

- ◼ What does the humanity of the other mean for us, now? After the common story of a global pandemic?

So yes, this …exploration.

The gist of this presentation is offered in a few parts: Part one, the case for thresholds. Part two, imagining futures which elides into part three(ish); Alt-Decol. Epistemological underpinnings, the references are oblique though—but these are Mignolo, Dussel, Hinkelammert, Quijano, Sarr and Diagne. I am with Mignolo on this one:

I prefer the action word – decoloniality – to reflect on my interrogations. Let me quote Catherine Walsh (2018: 17) from the important book on decoloniality which she wrote the Walter Mingolo:

> "Decoloniality denotes ways of thinking, knowing, being, and doing that began with, but also precede, the colonial enterprise and invasions. […] Moreover, it is indicative of the ongoing nature of struggles, constructions, and creations that continue to work within coloniality's margins and fissures to affirm that which coloniality has attempted to negate."

Thus, for her, "decoloniality, in this sense, is not a static condition. " Rather, it is an attitude and practice. In the matter of aesthesis, for this presentation is—*ennui*. Stories, you understand, need to have turning points that lead to transformation, not stasis, and it is the stasis in its different manifestations that I prod at, and judge. How much longer are we going to have these same, same kind of diagnostic conversations abstracting the very visceral and tangible human conditions and generating ever-new concepts that serve no other purpose other than generating more… concepts that move the human being further and further away from grasping that which should be tangible? Aren't you bored already?

The paper's flourishes are directed at the state of the scholarly quests and structures of the African Studies' nodes and hubs and their crisis of meaning in this new word to which you allude. The paper is infused, informed by, permeated by insights delivered by the crucible that is the present zeitgeist. What a threshold experience for humanity! We are reluctantly bundled into this one story, and learning, very quickly, the limits of the imagination of our solidarity, of our interest in the thriving and survival of others, of our previously sacrosanct institutions that in the face of a collective existential threat, simply crumbled. The pandemic, I think, has muted our grand posturings. Our self-soothing propaganda is consumed by our closet preoccupation with the primordial basics: life or death, and how humanity uses the forces of its experiencing and experimentation to support or sustain either life or death.

At the heart of our present restlessness is the consciousness of a generational as well as a global pivot mediated by all forms of unravelling of assumptions; the argument and conviction is an ancient one: old wine skins cannot contain new wine. That we are in some sort of liminal season

of humanity cannot be denied. What is arguably most needed now is a rediscovery of and a capacity to co-exist with the unknown, to dismantle that which no longer serves ideals, to embrace uncertainty, and to return to a deeper exploration of possibilities in the realm of the imagination. Among the questions that undergird this paper, one of them is this, given the context of our explorations, and the theme of this event:

Where are the primary receptacles for the gathering of and engagement with quintessential African storying, imagining and knowing located? Are these the African Studies Centres? The correct answer is, unfortunately, yes. But whose interests, ideas, ideologies, aspirations and futures do these serve primarily given where they are located? What role is accorded to those from the 'peripheries' who enter into the spaces? This is not a judgement call, by the way. The fact that the primary repositories of African related, derived knowledge, imagining and exploration are within these sites is not the fault of these sites, the responsibility is… African. Ours is the dearth of imagination, the inability to prioritise the urgent need to harness the superpower of our thought, vision and imagination as a strategy to gain power, control, wealth and intelligence linked to creating futures. Ours is the refusal to prioritise ourselves and our strategy for thought, for humanity and for ourselves, and doing this on, in and within our continent. As the ontological origins of these centres are mostly derived from mostly bizarre fantasies of an Africa that exists mostly in the lurid imagination of the stranger, and built on contested and muted histories, it should be no shock that the primary characteristic of these spaces is at least overtly—we are not ignorant of the intelligence and information gathering covert purposes of some of these spaces—(except for this one); is a ceaseless circling of metaphorical and historical wounds, of generating abstraction and concepts which often fail to turn ideas into, not just practice, but tangible life-products.

Aren't we bored yet?

Another question, underpinning this soul searching eruption is this: with all this decolonising going on, are we to assume that we all sing from a common and cosmological script, that the substance and structure of things are not infused by cultural biases and iterations, and that all that is needed to get things right is to tweak here and there? You who are most invested in these processes, do you actually believe that? I am not being doubtful, I just really want to know.

Also, what is the point of an intricate and ambitious pedagogical process that does not improve human beingness? Let's put it another way? To what goal is education, knowledge, and research? What purposes do these serve? Knowledge for the sake of knowledge? Given the state of the world today, is that still possible? Has there been a clarity in and of motivation by all agents? What do we actually desire? What do we need and what do we want? What do we want to accomplish? What have we not yet accomplished? What is the inevitability that we push against? It has already made its presence intensely felt. Yet one of the finest things to return to the site of the knowledge search is uncertainty, the unknown and the possibility of fresh questions.

Anyway, Majority World people inhabiting Africa Studies departments – most of which –not yours – were renamed, restructured anthropology, ethnography, study-of-the colonised-as object research centres, where said objects, corrupted, have their humanity negated—so , what do you get? What is the knowledge and truth you desire, want, and need? Do you obtain aesthetic joy in the process? I do understand that in Euro America, these are seemingly benign spaces out of which

one can observe the culture, gain intelligence about the habits of these. But on the other hand, might some of you be interested in the things these «African» studies don't ever even imagine for you: like Yacht design, the axial point of Science and Technology, Futurism? Ah….The internet of things? No? Artificial Intelligence, Geoscience – since everyone is obsessed with where the African resources are? No? Cosmology, Forensic History, The Geopolitics of Namibian Diamonds? Astrophysics and Underwater Geology? Deep Mind? How about studies in Dogon Mathematics? The Science of Gold Extraction? No? The Lunatic Mind and Manifest Destiny? African Studies on the themes of Donald Trump, Brexit, Lebanon or even the US and NATO withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan? Surrealism? Cezanne, Michael Armitage, Paul Onditi, Reflections on European Coloniality in Europe: Case studies, Ireland, Scotland and Post-War Germany. Mythologising Wilderness, African-Asian worldbuilding? I know! How about Ballet in Lagos? If any of you reacted negatively—*How do these fit into African studies*, how do they echo African reality? *See your life!* Ask yourself, why you resisted these. Isn't the problem, then in the structuring of Africa studies, what they mean, who creates them, for whom, and to what purpose? By the way, when will the old tropes and tired metaphors, be made to evaporate? What do they serve? Aren't the centres tired of having to force the threshold, mercurial worlds of Africa into a paper-thin constrained imagination, an invention of a place that does not exist? Why not offer room for a muscular grammar to emerge, one that will overwhelm and deconstruct a useless lexicon and prepare to receive a new-emerging world?

But these lead to a crucial question. For whom are the assorted Africa Study Centres established? No, I am not interested in the public relations statements in the brochures and websites, I tried for a quick audit of outcomes of placements, of where those involved show up. This was a thumb-suck internet cursory check. The results are at best, a wispy smoke signal. The main themes: security—different forms, policy-making, mostly associated with that strange word— 'governance', and, of course, the bogey-man themes favoured by the Euro-American metropole, such as the hyperinflated 'immigration'. Next to nothing that engages the continent as a protagonist in the world, with its agency, ambitions, and opinions. No wonder Africa's young people are looking eastwards for life-giving ideas and energy.

Does this very preliminary finding coincide with your own? You can form your conclusions—I have formed mine. Namely this, "Get Out!" You are stuck in the sunken place. No, actually… more seriously: What's the point? I'm not being facetious: *What's the point?* In the interstices of this long encounter, where are the tangible, mutually beneficial, scaled-up, life-enhancing outcomes, products, and resolutions? How has the subtext of the grammar of engagement evolved from the 400-year-old fantastical eruptions? In the words of business, for whom do these hubs exist? And having confronted the reality—not the propaganda, then ask yourselves, is this service necessary? For whom? How do these serve the African imagination, its ideals? Do current area studies in general, Africa studies in particular, have anything to offer in terms of African future crafting and world-building? And yet I must wonder, as an outsider, how do you purport to enter into the realm of big ideas under a constraining reality? Moreover, how do you propose to do this when the ontological foundations of these spaces are barely acknowledged or examined? Moreover, your academic grammar with its terror of the affect—will not permit a vigorous encounter and engagement with the full gamut of human experience, how then does it purport to serve human reality?

I ask this as pluricentric, and a pluriversalist African who negotiates, traverses, and occupies worlds within and without, and sometimes simultaneously. I am a card-carrying cheering squad member for multi-polarity, a stalker of the Mignolo-led 'pluriversality as a universal project' initiative—anyway, I ask this of you as a passer-by called to comment on a ~~crime~~ scene. Is one to assume that intrinsic histories, cultural pathologies, faults, insecurities, and biases automatically evaporate when a culture defines and projects an epistemological framework? If this is the case, shouldn't knowledge then deliver an overt movement towards a horizon, or is stasis acceptable as a part of the knowledge generation enterprise? In a world beset by so many forces, can these states of affairs persist?

Ennui: I looked it up: "a feeling of listlessness and dissatisfaction arising from a lack of occupation or excitement." For example, when the European vaccine regimen announced that they were closing entry to those who were vaccinated by products they had not approved, thereby creating legitimacy to close entry access to Majority World's people particularly from Africa, those monitoring social media replies were struck by the sound of....*crickets*....Indifference. The other response was the approval given to the Chinese vaccines—almost to underline a point—which I think the EU will have missed—and to prepare to set up local vaccine production hubs, with priority given to—you got it—Sinovac and Sinopharm. Before the pandemic, there would have been a storming of the bridges by the many; there would have been howls of «unfair», and appeals for rightness.

But something has entered our world: an apathy and weariness, "the inability to rouse oneself to give a damn", a quotation taken from the notes on Svendsen's *A Philosophy of Boredom* (2005), and this from the Majority World, a distancing note has entered into the old Africa-European dynamic. I might be wrong, but I sense that there are other and deeper currents underway, something more pertinent, something that offers a change of theme, a change of rhythm, pitch, of register, co-ordinates, and a change in the prevailing story of the world. The old story has delivered to itself its own obsolescence.

This aesthetic orientation of Majority World peoples—that is, most of us—is a powerful signal. There are some reasons for this: the emergence of China as a force of epochal transformation, the demands of the digital age for our attention, the public witness of the decline of the long-entrenched occidental hegemon: a combination of the arrival of Mr Trump, the January 6, 2021 America events where the bastion of the 'international rules-based order' was interfered with and desecrated, and the thorough public discombobulation that was the Euro-American Covid-19 responses. It feels a bit Wizard of Oz—ish, right? Or Humpty Dumpty's great fall. I know all the king's horses and all the king's men and their media machinery are trying to put Humpty Dumpty together again, mostly by touting vaccine nationalism—but we know, you know that we know that, to borrow from another fairy tale, «the emperor is naked». Sneaking out of Afghanistan in the middle of the night after twenty years does not underline the Master of the Universe thing. Not one bit. But what does anything mean for 'the now'? What invitations do we gather from this threshold moment? We know that there is no 'normal' to return to, don't we? There is something so tiresome and dull having to endure the hegemonical scramble to restore the old status quo by destabilising another country. The demonisation, dehumanisation, debilitisation of others script is so overdone, as is all the consent manufacturing to justify abysmal evil visited on newly designated enemies. The virtue-signalling, the pearl clutching it is madness, and it does not serve

the emerging age. The moral vacuum serves nobody. The part that is always left out is a concerted effort by centres of scholarship to examine the effects of such interventions on the now-devastated country. Have African study centres studied Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and even Vietnam? Syria, Somalia, and the Sahel? Is it a theme area under the Migration/Immigration rubric?

This is as much about an orientation to a common vision of reality and sense of humanity as it is an inquiry into how to meet the summons of the age. If the old world order is weakening, what is our future stake? What is our collective imagination that can offer another way of imagining spaces of in the world of study? What new alignments present themselves, and invite us to rethink how we set up spaces of inquiry? What do we do with our uncertainties? Can these be tapped into to allow a different sort of dreaming, hoping, imagining? How do we intend to craft the future of academia, of the knowledge hubs, and these in a way that serves the demands of the continent and the epochs?

What is our point of pedagogical reference? What is the premise of education, and education for our worlds, including the continent, Africa? What undergirding philosophy would govern our educational choices? What assumptions and projections are still wrapped in our intellectual agenda? What African intellectual agenda matters? Where does one access it? What theories of knowledge, of meaning, of being inform our collective educational impulses? For what, and for whom, are our knowledge creation interventions? Which of the humans should these serve? Does anyone know?

Work on the ground, even attached to associated projects tends to reveal a tally of compromises, twisted-arm deals, and a profit under-all-costs game, not just the vaccine game, but the HIV/AIDS therapeutics before that—ten years, the hideously skewed commodities markets—that is a whole other gap, the recent story of the dumping of whey with palm oil replacement milk substances and destroying the pastoralist livelihoods and economies in Burkina Faso, while through the side lips of the same mouths decrying rising malnutrition rates in West Africa.[19] I wonder, I wonder often if perhaps even we, the thinkers, are climbing up the wrong tree. What point is anything if we are still in doubt about the humanity of others? Isn't this a more psychological and spiritual crisis that requires other methods to be resolved? What does the humanity of Africans mean for Africans and the Centres of African Study?

By the way, how many dedicated European Studies Centres are hosted by and within African academic institutions? Couldn't find one. Why? And if they exist, which ones are dealing with futuristic themes and epistemologies rather than say Governance and Democracy, Security (aka, how do we sell arms here/plant the seed of new wars there?) Agriculture (which European seeds and equipment do we sell)? or Borders and Boundaries (Immigration is a problem and let's not talk about what we did in Libya, or Syria or Afghanistan). The trending themes are «Indo-Pacific» with its focus on crushing China, coupled with an eerie obsession with Africa-China relationships. There is a problem of perspective and lens: most Africa studies Centres centralise the notion of the Euro-American as coloniser. It means that when China shows up in Africa scholars are

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[19]   https://www.politico.eu/interactive/the-eu-milk-lookalike-that-is-devastating-west-africas-dairy-sector/.   The article is by Simon Marks and Emmet Livingstone (retrieved on August 12, 2020).

compelled to apply that lens, unique to Euro-America to explore and explain what is, in fact, a new phenomenon in the world and in history. This myopic lens rubs out African agency or, its pre-European engagements with the rest of the World by way of its seas. There is little consideration that a general African pro-China stance is linked to historical connections, anti-colonial nostalgia, a shared consciousness of world-losing because of a pathological incursion; that it could also be a pushback for European perfidy in Libya, and that May 13, 2000 sneering cover of the Economist and its "Hopeless Continent" title.[20] The paucity of thought that imagines that this relationship sprouts only out of Euro-American absences or lack is puerile. It also points tot he overarching question: of what value then are these Africa Studies hubs as they are structured today, if they are unable to grasp even these fundamentals of an evolving relationship?

But isn't this part of a larger epistemological fault with its undercurrent of infantilising and negating African agency, fragmenting the continent's geographies, dispossessing and dislocating its diverse peoples from, especially their historical maritime networks, insisting that every time Africa connected persons are found to have deep roots elsewhere, as in India, Turkey or Iraq, Kazakhstan they could only have gone there as slaves, even though the genealogical chronicles propose a different story. When some Pate islanders long ago referred to their very apparent China lineages, they were told they were speaking nonsense even as the tombs were being desecrated and stripped off their ceramics by the same genealogy-deniers.

And Sub-Sahara?

Sub-Sahara?

Let me not start.

Of this typology, and those who insist upon it—it is as useful as speaking of «Sub-Scandinavian» or Sub-Channellic Europe. In imagining the future, the challenge is in bringing down the edifices of lunacy that infect ideas and their propositions. Is that possible in this weary world? Put another way, in this summons to reorder our existence, to what can we devote the power and contents of our imagination? We are at another threshold in the history of our existence. We find ourselves in an ambiguous state of being with an awareness of a huge storm brewing. I am an amused but interested reader of the notes from the recent G-Whatever summit. The anti-China shrillness is a bit much, a bit unsettling, a lot…not reassuring, and the fact that the interlocutors lost sight of that was fascinating. If the Africa Studies Centres were liberated spaces, these could form a compelling study on the state and shape of the world; they would be as neutral brokers of emerging ideas. Against the crumbling of the Reformation/Enlightenment hegemonic matrix, what futures present themselves to all of us? What are the possibilities? The only risk is a return to the debilitating past. Whatever comes next cannot be as ghastly as what has gone before. It is telling that this season is marking its exit by sneaking out of Kabul in the middle of the night after an odious war that has achieved nothing, and also excelled in the egregious slaughter of especially young men—those offered as a sacrifice to bloodthirsty politicians and traders in human anguish. Much profit has been made, weapons have been tested on humans for effectiveness, and deaths

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[20] https://www.economist.com/leaders/2000/05/11/hopeless-africa (checked last time on February 11, 2024).

have been quietly miscounted, with Afghani war deaths minimised—in the name of democracy, human rights, and the rules-based order…of course.

I have been waiting for African studies centre environmentalists to lament the mountains and caves that were blown up by the peddlers of democracy, human rights and the rules-based-order. But….nothing. Not even a squeak.

Anyway, my point is that we have entered a liminal place of being. I want to include a similar word: the transitive verb—*to limn* 'to suffuse or highlight something with colour or light, to delineate'.

Because of all the pandemic dramatics, new pathways within and elsewhere have formed; a river always finds a course. I think the zeitgeist is stimulating this as part of its shifting:

Three pivots:

Turning within—a movement towards interiority—in Kenya, by the way, the local tourism sector that survived during the long Covid season did so because they had marketed themselves to the locals, and to the region. The fossils in the Tourism Board snapped awake to the obvious; their need to prioritise domestic and intra-African tourism. The second turn, that serves the interest of the Majority World is among ourselves, without Occidental mediation—which is difficult because that is another popular habit, mediation via institutions and businesses. The third turning, is a wilful one to broaden one's options and prioritise connections with Asia, South America, and the Middle East, and take new pleasure in the new, the refreshed, the change of conversation and themes of preoccupation.

Here is a suggestion:

Let's use this threshold season to make pilgrimages to sites where another imagination of reality proposes itself. We each bear in our spirits the memories, hopes and metaphors of another way of seeing and being. A consciousness of being sheltered in the innermost images our ten thousand languages. It is time. Don't you desire a firm stake in the maps of the futures shimmering into existence? What new scopes of mutuality based on deep interest? What would the grammar of our new encounters produce?

Imagine that.

Anyway, now, a story, à propos of nothing: Actually, I lie. It is a convenient one:

Ready?

Once upon a time, on a bright and cheerful morning, with dew on the ground, the scent of new grass in the air, and vast horizons shimmering orange and indigo, the great chief among all beings, the lion, stood on a rock overlooking the rolling plains and distant hills, not dissimilar to that one the monkey used to lift the lion cub Simba in the film 'The Lion King'. Lion surveyed the realm and all territories above and below that were under his domination and jurisdiction. Satisfaction made his chest swell. Descending, he stopped at a nearby ecologically certified rain puddle for a fairly traded sip of water. Mid stoop, Lion in the mirror of the water, Lion saw his golden face, his thick black mane, his fierce eyes, and the long history of his exploits and uncontested hegemony. Stirred, he realised he needed to radiate the glory upon the creatures of the realm, and have it reflected

back to him. Such a reflection made him shine even brighter. He framed the question and decided on the methodology of a fact-confirmation tour of his constituency.

In an enclosure next to the acacias he happened upon the Colobus monkey sucking the place of his hand where a thumb was absent: "Rooooooar!" declared the Lion, baying into the monkey face, "Who is master of the plains, emperor of all that is surveyed, commander of the forests and admiral of its waters, King of creatures above, below and under the ground, who alone decrees who should live and who must die?"

The Colobus kowtowed, stretched prostrate on the ground, and stuttered, "It is thou oh great Lion, only thou."

Lion approved of that response. "Carry on, carry on… rise, once you see my back." He ambled onward.

Turning west, Lion happened upon an eland having early morning breakfast. Eland froze with the leaves in his mouth at the grand and terrible thing he saw before him. Without hesitation, contemplating the possibility of regime change, Lion pounced and held Eland down by his neck.

Breathing his mouth-washed breath over Eland, he growled, the question, the only question:

"Roooooar! Who is master of the plains, emperor of all that is surveyed, commander of the forests and admiral of its waters, king of creatures above, below and under the ground, who alone decrees who should live and who must die?"

The Eland, spat out the answer with the soggy grass in his mouth: "It is thou great and merciful Lion, only thou."

Lion felt even better, and therefore extended his charity to a hapless beast. He patted Eland on his head, and announced, magnanimously, "Oh well, as you were. Eat, eat. Be happy. Live long." With a wave, he left, circumnavigating the landscape, encountering, among others, the marabout Stork, the warthog, and the pangolin who all delivered variations of "it is thou oh fine beast who are king of the plains, conqueror of the savannah, etc., etc."

Near lunchtime, Lion feeling peckish thought about taking out a zebra for his snack after Zebra had delivered the answer to the question, the only question. But, ho! What was this? Fifty metres away Great-Aunt Elephant was browsing, delicately picking out seeds from a baobab pod, and…ignoring him.

"Roooooar," Lion announced himself after gliding over majestically...

No response, no reaction.

"Roooooar! I demand that you tell me who is master of the plains, emperor of all that is surveyed, commander of the forests and admiral of its waters, king of creatures above, below and under the ground, who alone decrees who should live and who must die?"

Elephant did not bother to raise her head. A little confused about that, and concluding that Elephant, must be deaf, Lion raised his volume, and the sound was as thunder in the hearts of all beings, who shivered where they hid, and waited to die.

Roooooar! Rooooar! Who is master of the plains, emperor of all that is surveyed, commander of the forests and admiral of the waters, king of ....”

Elephant sighed heavily, and even the trees trembled. This situation had not been in her plans when she set out for the day. She did not need such negativity in her headspace. She turned to stare at the Lion whose fangs were now bared. Elephant took hold of Lion with her tusks. She tossed Lion up in the air. Lion came crashing down and dislocated his hips. Elephant proceeded to deliver a thorough beating to Lion who lost four teeth, fractured his paw, and turned an unfortunate blue.

Elephant then resumed her delicate snacking. After a while, there was a firm drag on her tail. “Ethcuse me”, Lion, lisped through gaps in his mouth, as he gathered pieces of himself. His look was hurt. “Ethcuse me.” He repeated. Elephant looked over her shoulder. Lion continued, aggrieved. “I’m dithguthted! Dithguthted! Why thuch tangential violenth? If you do not know the anther…you should athk. I would have told you. You should have asthed me, ”Who is mathter of the plains, emperor of all that is thurveyed…?”

Elephant trumpeted once. Lion hastened away, hobbled, grumbling, flinching in pain, speaking to himself. “If you don’t know the anthwer to thomething, athk those who know. Just athk. What’s tho hard about athking?”

The world as we have known it has changed in a way that I am not even sure our humanity realizes or understands. The fallout from our ongoing virus crisis, the general failures in human solidarity in the face of a shared existential threat will have implications to our human and ecological relations going forward. As an old power hegemony shakes from the world, a very challenging adjustment period emerges as power centres realign, move and reform the way the world looks. The struggle to consolidate old abandoned positions is likely to accelerate. Given the heavy burden of societal and earth challenges, the soul exhaustion most of humanity is enduring, mirrors the groaning of nature, I presume, of which we are a part, a quest for all manner of revitalization becomes intrinsic to policy re-examination.

Now, time for a public confession:

The boredom bit of things.

«Decolonial»?

I don’t care for it one way or another. Let me tell you why? As long as the colonial bit is in the morpheme, the predator centres itself, as an agent, a force, a site of meaning. It does not mind being an agent of and for evil, just as long as it has agency.

I can’t.

The role assigned to Africa and Africans of perpetual victim is tedious. The embodiment of this victimisation serves only the predator, whose satisfaction is sustained, who also hast he free gift of an eternal scapegoat upon whom to projects its pathologies and moral decrepitude.

So, no.

I am pro indifference, and pro self-indulgent Africa centering and privileging itself. I am pro African retreat, pro «Learn-from-China», and write a script oft the future of the world with Africa as the main protagonist.

The elephant, you see, has entered the WhatsApp group.

Finally, and maybe this is the meat of the text—but I won't go far into that point, it is one of those conversations that in the parlance of Kenyan wedding committees—let me code switch—*watu wa ocha tupatane nyuma ya hema*.

History itself offers us a camouflaged source of power, the violent and tragic encounter with Europe, and in most places of the North of Africa, with Arabia, forced a change in consciousness, and reorientation of the certainties of what it meant to be human. The centuries have been relentless on the continent and a break and pause to quietly reflect has been absent. Six seething centuries and constantly fending off—often losing, wily invaders craving your bounty— is also exhausting isn't it? It takes its toll: I was thinking of the giant tuskers, the bull elephants who before the European hunters showed up, would parade African landscapes with massive tusks. Nature collaborated with the pachyderm collective, and the next generation bulls have been born with smaller tusks. Don't you wonder how the African collective and psyche evolved to survive human predators? What new archetypes have entered into the terrain of our unconscious? What new visions and gifts these bear? How do we get to know? But the awesome fact of African and others' endurance is a feat of nature, of time, and of a people. Look at China! And no, I am not going to use that word I dislike in the way it is applied to our people—resilience—the word I want is not yet born—but it refers to a superpower. In this corner of the world, the relevance of Africa had been pretend-assumed to be done and dusted—Exhibit B—The Economist of May 13, 2000: The Hopeless Continent—the gods must have already been making mad those it intended to destroy for that was also the year of the first Africa-China Economic summit.

Look, what would it take to gently inhabit a space of Us? Step into it and get on with the re-languaging, re-dreaming, reframing; working on a new lexis of and for all of us. Rediscovering, delighting in, and co-operating with one another, with a deliberate intent of inscribing themselves into the future, as imagined by, expressed through, painted and written through a thorough, truthful, engaged and shared being, a rediscovery of the sense of each other and the world, and a wilful habitation of the transcendentals (goddesses, truth, justice, beauty) they hold in common. Africans, here, there, wherever, what do we desire for ourselves, for the universe, on our dream-terms? What is the story of us groaning to be born that will define our interests, our ambitions, our own intents to power, wealth, security and our pedagogical aspirations, and to mutuality? Ours is the biggest, wealthiest continent; the world depends on our wealth to create their wealth. But should we waste the gift of our imagination explaining ourselves to others in energy-sapping sessions that lead only into labyrinths?

China did its soul searching through thought hubs that consolidated their imagination, thoughts and vision into what we read as the Belt Road Initiative. It is a story that reaches the galaxies. What of us? What story can we summon for ourselves and the world, one in which we are expansive protagonists of our destiny inhabiting a restored and fecund universe in a simple tribute to our pleasure in existence? Nobody in the universe will ever create for us a centre of study that will satisfy our yearnings, nor will they imagine us as coherent, luminous or glorious—

that responsibility, the power, the imagination, the coherence and the grammar for this is entirely ours to own, to illuminate, to use and to give and that, my dears, is the most difficult task of all, harder than independence.

Incidentally, the new post-pandemic documents by IMF and UNDP could not wait to return to the grammar of African victimhood, propped, of course, by—Western-trained policy heads and our reliably, apathetic leaders.—those ventriloquist dummies. I watch in disgust as the stories of African agency—the Senegal researchers, the Kenyan biomedical engineers get swept off the page. I had to wonder: who is served by an embodiment of African victimhood? Who is most threatened by African agency? Whose story is reinforced by the projection of an Africa that is a perpetual site of doom, gloom, misery, and the beneficiary of Euro-American largesse?

The site of human contestation starts in the realm of the imagination. And we, the many peoples who form Africa, have not yet fully entered the gladiatorial arena intending to secure authority over it. Isn't it time, though? The language in the story is constructed does not matter at all; its test of meaning is in its translatability anyway, what matters most is meaning, and ist activation as life.

What do you do with your inner worlds, Africa persons?

These are the realms of generation and expansion that are the rabbit holes that lead to a holy grail. I am convinced of this. Caught up in the fully dull and drained-of-life framing that institutions use to frame the structuring and distribution of knowledge, which also serve to domesticate the fecund human imagination, including wonder and creativity, the question is which other methods exist that will restore and replenish our human sense of enchantment? Such little stuff is produced that reveals our gorgeousness and the beauty of the histories over which we are custodians. The relentless bombardment of negativity and a grammar of diminution has pressed down our spirits and bodies. The demand for themes and studies that serve to prove our lack and pathologies— takes a toll. It takes a toll. Even in European culture, malediction—words and phrases (linked to image) repeated over and over and directed at another with the intent of inciting and inflicting evil upon this other—is well understood.

Why would we wilfully enter into the game of cursing ourselves, even for a degree?

Centuries of such necromancy will have an impact. Malefic repetitions incite a trance state.

But enough!

Enough.

The pandemic season offered a brief reprieve from these gross incantations. For a time, in an equal world struggling the same way, struggling with a common experience, there was clarity. Our duty, work, knowledge, immensities, and timelessness as inheritors and custodians of a cosmos, its dreamings, and indeed, failings. But only Ours. There are more exuberant stories that live trapped in many innermost lives. What treasures are kept within? What languages do these speak particularly to our ideals and idyll, our longing for wholeness, community; for dominion, abundance, family, beauty, justice, goodness, order, and truth?

New and grand worlds emerge only out of an intentional meeting of imagination with consciousness.

So, after this intervention, *Watu wa ocha*, people of the house, let's meet and 'have tea' behind the tent. The *shemeji*—our in-laws and entanglements: Asia, Oceania, The Middle East, The Caribbean, South America, wait a bit, we'll call you in an hour; there's a thing we need to discuss. As for the rest, don't mind us; the music is good, the food plentiful, the cake is served, eat, dance, and leave at your leisure.

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Modalities of Theorizing

An Interdisciplinary Reflection on Conspiracy Theories

Joschka Philipps & Aurélien Gillier

Abstract

A conspiracy theorist and a social theorist differ in their modalities of "theorizing"; a sociologist and a photographer use different modalities of "researching". This paper revolves around these contrasts. Our aim is to tease out the added value of working with modalities as a heuristic lens. We, the sociologist and the photographer mentioned above, reflect on our quest to depict and analyze conspiracy theories from different angles and through different media, notably text and image. In Conakry, the unruly capital city of the Republic of Guinea, our respective modalities of research were tested and challenged, readapted and modified through exchanges with a growing interdisciplinary research team. Drawing from these experiences, our core argument in this article is reflexive: modalities help us highlight the partial nature of our own methodological, theoretical and epistemological approaches. They demonstrate that our tools for depicting and understanding the world around us (the camera, the notebook, the conspiracy theory, the interview, the body, etc.) structure not only what we see, but also what we ignore in the world. As such, modalities hint not only at the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue and a critical eclecticism of methods and approaches. They also call for a more self-critical approach in the study of conspiracy theories, beyond depicting them as the theoretical "other", against which the social sciences assume their legitimacy and authority.

Keywords: modalities, conspiracy theories, mixed methods, photography, sociology

Figure 1: Chasing spirits. Guinea 2022.

Introduction

How to address a topic that is elusive by nature?[21] How to understand and describe, let alone analyze, what eludes understanding? A lucky coincidence, or fate, brought about the collaboration

between sociologist Joschka Philipps and historian-turned-photographer Aurélien Gillier who shared and cherished these ultimately methodological questions from their respective disciplinary perspectives. The idea of turning them into an interdisciplinary endeavour was to address the elusive and the unknown—and notably their political significance—from a sociological and a photographic viewpoint. In terms of modalities, the task was to fathom what a sociological mode of research could accomplish and express through text, and what a photographer's mode of research could do and express through images. This division of labour came initially with a sense of liberation. In highly simplified terms, the sociologist would be able to delegate his concern for ambiguity and ambivalence to the photographer whose images, he believed, were much better suited to take care of them than his textual approaches. The photographer, in turn, who is also a former researcher, would be free to focus on the creative performativity of his art and leave the task of description and analysis to the sociologist.

This, in the proverbial nutshell, is the initial idea behind the Junior Research Group "Politics of the Unknown. Conspiracism and conflict." Based at the Africa Multiple Cluster at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, it has since its launch in 2021 gained new members, foci, and topics, but the overarching interest still concerns a critically eclectic approach to phenomena that straddle the divide between the imaginary and the real (Halloran 1983). A key focus is on conspiracy theories, as imagined theories about how power is organized and abused. Sociological and photographic methods constitute different modalities of researching and theorizing about, and ultimately relating to, conspiracy theories. As the initiators and co-authors of the present article, we seek here to provide a reflection on that interdisciplinary approach and how the concept of modalities can help us make sense of different modes of researching and theorizing.

Addressing the concept of modalities in this regard comes with a particular challenge, for the term 'modalities' is way more amenable to conceptual discussions than to photographic interpretations. Whereas long debates may be justified in defining and discussing the concept of 'modalities', it is difficult to imagine what image comes to mind when hearing 'modalities'.[22] If 'modalities' as a concept thus mirrors the humanities' and social sciences' weddedness to a kind of complexity that necessitates textual approaches, photography as a research practice allows for a counter perspective, not least of relating differently to an object of study. This has to do with the final product photography aims at. Photographic images, compared to academic texts, are sufficiently idiosyncratic media—they capture one situation rather than making a general statement—and sufficiently open to manifold interpretations—different viewers looking at different details of the image rather than having to follow a linear structure—so that photographers do not have to justify why they took a given shot from a given angle, let alone to theorize about what often boils down to their inexplicable intuition.

Aurélien Gillier's modality of research, to avoid speaking of the photographer's modality, thus revolves around the task of making images that can lend credence to a general idea that is not

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[22] To be sure, the magnificent metaphor of Tierno Bokar Saalif Tall, quoted in the introduction, of Islam as "water that takes the colour of the landscape through which it is running," evokes a powerful image of modalities—so strong that one might ask to what degree an image, if given the opportunity, can inform a concept.

necessarily confined to his own concept of that idea. The multiplicity of interpretations is inescapable: once the photos are out, he leaves the question of what they mean to other people. In contrast, Joschka Philipps's modality of research is about defining sociological interpretations of social realities that hold general plausibility beyond his subjective viewpoint, for instance by providing a methodological rationale, accounting for his own positionality and implicit value judgements, and aligning himself with reputable theoretical schools while discussing alternative approaches. Besides the risk of missing essential elements, the fear of being misinterpreted by others constitutes a key motivational driver in refining his conceptual apparatuses and methodological approaches. In this regard, the discussion about modalities is inextricably linked to that about medialities, in the sense that the modality of research and theorizing is strongly informed by the media it employs—be it the camera, the recording device, the questionnaire, the immersed body or the research journal—and by the media by which the research is rendered public, be it texts (novels, policy papers, biographies, scientific studies, etc.) or images (portraits, mise-en-scène, documentary photographs, etc.).

The question we discuss in this article is how the concept 'modalities' allows us to capture different ways of researching and theorizing, both in an inter- or transdisciplinary relation between photographic and sociological modes, and with regards to sociological vs. conspiracy theories of power. The double comparison thrives on a presumably clear contrast. On the one hand, the collaboration between photography and social science research is widely encouraged and practiced in various forms, including in African studies (de Boeck and Plissart 2004; Cohen 2021; Hoffman 2017). On the other hand, the relation between academic and conspiracy theorizing usually boils down to fierce antagonism. One could go as far as arguing that conspiracy theories, a term that "always includes an accusation" (Boltanski 2014: 196), constitute the theoretical 'other' against which the social sciences assume their legitimacy and authority. While we shall end up emphasizing that neither the collaboration nor the antagonism are as clear-cut as perhaps expected, this comparison will help us to deal with different modalities of researching and theorizing from a sufficiently abstract perspective informed by two dissimilar concerns.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The first part elaborates on the relation between sociological and conspiracy theories as two modalities of theorizing. 'Modalities' serves here as a concept that enables distinction. For instance, conspiracy theorizing can be depicted as an actor-centered modality of theorizing, focused on secret groups of powerful actors, whereas the sociological modality of theorizing conceptualizes agency in terms of structures and forces that remain largely anonymous. While the two modalities are usually framed in terms of an opposition, the coming section also looks at the overlaps between them.

In the second part of the paper we address how modalities of researching interact with one another, as in interdisciplinary research. In form of a dialogue between the sociologist and the photographer, it describes our interactions in the field and how we followed different research modalities based on the media we were working with. Carrying a camera or a notebook, looking for suitable photographic objects or anticipating how to conceptualize a given reality, these modalities shaped our relations with the people, knowledges, and circumstances in the field. Ultimately, we describe how our relation as researchers changed from an interdisciplinary to a transdisciplinary modality. The conclusion finally reflects on what binds the two parts together:

the fact that modalities of researching and theorizing are always partial, and that they structure not only what we see in the world, but also what we ignore and what remains unknown to us.

Part I: Modalities of theorizing — conspiracy theories and social theory

Ever since conspiracy theories have become an object of scientific inquiry, academics have attacked them with a sense of urgency to draw the line between critical thinking and misguided paranoia (Hofstadter 1964; Popper 1962)[23]. Recent academic contributions in Germany have gone as far as advocating for dropping the term 'conspiracy theory' altogether, for it "would grant too much 'academic honour' to this kind of thinking and put it on a par with developed scientific theories - which would not be appropriate [...] even vis-à-vis theoretical approaches that are controversial in scientific discourse" (Pfahl-Traughber 2019).[24] This reluctance to accept conspiracy theories as theories is singularly prominent in Germany (Butter 2020). Whether or not this has to do with their significant role during the Nazi regime is a matter of speculation, but deserves consideration. Antisemitic theories about a globe-spanning Jewish conspiracy constituted the rhetoric and ideological backbone of the Holocaust; the "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion", a forged account of the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, were one of Hitler's key references in this regard. Even though the Protocols were exposed as a hoax as early as 1920, its central idea of a Jewish world conspiracy lives on (Cohn 1966; Landes and Katz 2012; Wolf 1920). If Nazi Germany's history obliges us thus to be vigilant vis-à-vis the political risks of conspiracy theories, we should remember that scientific theories were a prominent tool of Nazi ideology, too. Using the term 'conspiracy theory' thus is not necessarily intended to grant legitimacy, but to critically assess different modes of theorizing without buying precipitously into the concept of 'theory' as validated by scientific rationality.

The generalizing talk about scientific rationality is suspicious to begin with. Science, as Knorr-Cetina (1999: 4) has shown in her magistral ethnography of high energy physics and molecular biology, "is not one enterprise but many, a whole landscape—or market—of independent epistemic monopolies producing vastly different products." The scientific study of conspiracy theories is thus equally divided by different disciplines that work with vastly different conceptualizations, methodologies and core assumptions, some of them "almost diametrically opposed" (Butter and Knight 2019: 43). Dismissing conspiracy theories against the backdrop of a unified set of accepted scientific principles may thrive on the idealized image of science as an authoritative source of truth, but remains fundamentally flawed because it mistakes science for a matter of consensus.

If one were however to break down the notion of theory as providing "a better understanding of the world" (Butter 2018: 53), if only subjectively, then conspiracy theories can indeed be thought of as theories. Michael Butter, a key author in the field, argues precisely that, adding that their emphasis on human agency makes them particularly popular and attractive: "Conspiracy theories

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[23] For a brilliant discussion on the concept of paranoia and its historical evolution, see Boltanski (2014: 170-77).

[24] Translated from German. For similar positions in the German academic discussion, see Götz-Votteler and Hespers (2019); Nocun and Lamberty (2020); for counter positions, see Anton and Schink (2021: 19ff.); Butter (2020).

create meaning and emphasize human agency; they make it possible to identify the alleged culprits and convey the hope that they can be stopped" (Butter 2018: 104). Butter identifies here one key difference vis-à-vis social scientific theorizing. Whereas conspiracy theories consider history as plannable by people, the social sciences consider the driving forces of history to be largely anonymous (Butter 2018: 40): social structures and relations, besides a whole array of unpredictable coincidences, can generally not be planned. While conspiracies happen, conspiracy theories are wrong, Butter argues, insofar as they theorize the world based on the idea of an all-powerful agency that is sociologically inconceivable. Hofstadter (1964) makes a similar argument, though in a more dismissive fashion, in his foundational essay "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," which has been fundamental in lending legitimacy to the social sciences in contrast to conspiracy theories. The vast majority of academic analysts thus conceptualizes conspiracy theories not as theories about conspiracies, but as theories about particularly unlikely or impossible conspiracies.

Such a specification may seem outright bizarre, but it has very serious consequences for fields that seek to study real political collusion and deceit. As Cribb (2009: 2) argues, the academic study of "shadow governance" or "parapolitics" has been seriously compromised by the field's "inability to distinguish itself sharply from grand conspiracy theory." Parapolitics scholars insist that there is a need to study real conspiracies at the micro- and meso level and theorize about their implications for transnational politics without being associated with the mainstream concept of conspiracy theories. Collusion has always been a hallmark of power dynamics after all (cite Machiavelli), and even the core entity of political science, the state, historically emerged in Europe as a criminal protection racket (Tilly 1990). But while political science relies on today's liberal-democratic state as an idealized regulative entity to theorizes politics, it is bound to ignore the politics "besides the state" (Bellagamba and Klute 2008) that operate secretly and covertly—as in conspiracy theories. An alternative conceptualization of conspiracy theories would thus see them as theories about the role of conspiracies in politics.

> Stripped of its speculative and sensationalist armature, 'conspiracy theory' stands revealed as the merely self-consciously parapolitical realisation that covert agencies and actions are an integral part of the practical exercise of governance within both national and transnational spaces. Global governance is never politically neutral or morally innocent as it is always highly prone towards the fostering of deep politics, even within its most innocuous forms […] (Wilson 2009: 37).

Historically, such a perspective is embedded in a conception of the political world in which decolonization, enfranchisement and suffrage have allowed for occasional democratic outcomes while threatening "important, entrenched political, social and economic interests" that continue to operate below the radar of political normalcy of liberal statehood (Cribb 2009: 6).

Luc Boltanski (2014: 201) is one of the very few academics to address in detail the difficulty of deciding "whether one is confronting a 'real' or an 'imaginary' conspiracy." He thoroughly problematizes mainstream scholarship's reductionist preoccupation with the absurd and "paranoid" outliers on a large spectrum of what could count as a conspiracy theory. But Boltanski also flips the question around: if social scientists tend to dismiss grand conspiracy theories as paranoid imaginations, what about the imagined character of the entities that social scientists deal

with, such as nation-states, ethnic groups, or civil societies?[25] Given that these entities are at not empirically observable in their entirety, let alone the causal relations between them, the question arises "as to whether what [sociology] is describing belongs to the order of reality or to the order of metaphor" (Boltanski 2014: 228). Since the core concepts, or metaphors, of sociology are frequently used by sociologists and non-sociologists alike, Boltanski (2014: 229) furthermore argues that sociology copes with an inherent anxiety about the allegedly "shameful promiscuity" between itself and other people's (non-sociological) explanations of the social world. This anxiety over the promiscuity with non-sociological explanations, we argue, underlies the mainstream conceptualization of conspiracy theories. Constructed as a presumably outlandish object of analysis, conspiracy theories actually reflect, in the true sense of the word, sociology's inner-most fears of not being sufficiently scientific, i.e. not sufficiently different from (and intellectually superior to) quotidian explanations of the social world. How not to read the harsh accusations levelled against conspiracy theories as the very accusations that 'sociology' is most afraid of? Of being not sufficiently objective, not really falsifiable, of being circular and shot through with confirmation bias, and perhaps most importantly, of being naïve in its conception of the political world?

Based on similar self-interrogations, there is today a well-established field of scholars who address conspiracy theories as a means to critically assess the social sciences and humanities. Their arguments, to cite but a few, range from problematizing the media's marginalization of racial minorities by calling them conspiracy theorists (Orr and Husting 2019) to wondering about the "real difference between conspiracists and […] social critique" (Latour 2004: 228), up to accepting "Human Science as Conspiracy Theory" (Parker 2000). Even positivist scholars in psychology and the cognitive sciences have written about the cognitive biases that explain why we all, as humans, are susceptible to believing in conspiracy theories (Brotherton 2015). Such research perspectives may be marginal in the larger public concern, or moral panic, over conspiracy theories, but they do gain credence in scientific debates. As Joe Uscinski (2019: ix–x) confesses, somewhat perplexed, in his edited volume on "Conspiracy Theories and Those who Believe in Them", published by Oxford University Press and uniting a large array of scholars from various disciplines: "I did not know that the dividing line between those who studied [conspiracy theories] and those who believed in them might be so fuzzy at times!"

By contraposing 'sociological' theories and 'conspiracy' theories as different modalities of theorizing, we can see how modalities are constructed to enable distinctions. These distinctions can in turn be contested. In other words, the degree to which one considers sociological theories and conspiracy theories as radically different or similar modalities depends on the ways in which we conceptualize each modality at the outset. Whether I see social theory in the light of scientific rationality or in terms of critical reflexivity changes the matter just as profoundly as whether I see conspiracy theories *a priori* as false or as potentially true. Even the core difference observed by Michael Butter, who distinguishes actor-centered conspiracy theories from concept-guided social

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[25] It is moreover fundamentally contested to what degree these concepts point to a plausible ontological unit, not the least in African Studies. On the state, see Abrams (1988), Niang (2018); on ethnic groups, see Brubaker (2002); on civil society, see Bayart (1986), Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), Makumbe (1998).

theory, may be questioned if one understands both actors and concepts as "metaphors we live by," each standing for something else (Lakoff and Johnson 2003).[26]

Understanding different ways of theorizing in terms of different 'modalities' can thus be considered a starting point that enables distinction, for whatever purpose this may be useful. In the following part of the paper we address how modalities of researching interact with one another, as in interdisciplinary research. While the previous section focused thus on an abstract distinction between sociological and conspiracist modalities of theorizing—and how such distinctions can in turn be contested—the second part of this article is more practice-oriented. It shows how we, the authors, were equipped with different research modalities and how we interacted with the knowledges, people, and circumstances in Conakry in ways that were initially contingent on these modalities. Ultimately, we describe how our relation as researchers changed from an interdisciplinary to a transdisciplinary modality.

Part II: Modalities of researching — photography and sociology

We initially thought of our interdisciplinary encounter in terms of a stark distinction between the image and the text, if not a competition between the arts and the social sciences. This was based on our appreciation of their dissimilar capacities. Distinguishing between the true and the false, for instance, remains a key concern of the sciences (see Luhmann 1992), while the arts can playfully and creatively subvert these categories with no need for a coherent framework. For sure, conceptual art and postmodern social theory have blurred these distinctions from both sides (Collins 1998). But on the most general level, as Lawson (2001) puts it, science is invested in the search for "closure" while the arts are invested in the search for "openness". Our fieldwork, however, and not least the task of co-authoring the present article, made us increasingly aware how different modalities of research can interact to the point of fusing, to become a third, transdisciplinary modality, in which each initial modality was transformed by working with the other.

In this second part of this chapter, we address this interplay of modalities in form of a dialogue. What may initially look like an interview is ultimately a stylized exchange based on various recorded conversations, field notes, memories and images from our three research stays in Conakry since 2019. We choose this dialogical form not only to allow for a less formal exchange, but also to highlight our (inter-)subjectivities as inevitable parts of the research. The topics, listed as subheadings, are arranged chronologically, starting with a reflection on the concept 'modalities' and then describing the evolution of the project from our first field research in 2019 to the more recent stints in Conakry. For each topic, we drafted separate answers, then discussed and amended them so that our respective parts speak to one another.

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[26] This is ultimately the position of Bruno Latour (2004: 229), who concentrates not on the central building blocks of critical social theory, but its overarching motive of unveiling the "powerful agents hidden in the dark", whether we call them "society, discourse, knowledge-slash-power, fields of forces, empires, [or] capitalism", that makes them akin to conspiracy theories.

1 What are 'modalities'?

Aurélien Gillier: In my photographic practice, I don't think I work with 'modalities', a notion that is foreign to me. Of course, there are rules or artistic codes that guide my way of doing things, but they are more unconscious or incorporated, than thought and theorized. The photographic practice that I defend is less conceptual than sensitive, impulsive. The only 'modality' that prevails would be to let myself be guided by my subject (my theme) and by my subjects (the people and objects photographed) in order to tell a story that is never written in advance. Fluidity and adaptation to the moments, situations, and relationships that develop in the field are therefore fundamental and can hardly be confined or reduced to a pre-established framework or modality. This is particularly true with regards to the themes of rumour and conspiracy, which invite us to let ourselves be guided, or rather lost, in unforeseen imaginations, in representations that elude my understanding to the point of confusion. Capturing them in fixed images is a challenge that is all the greater since I aim to fix in a photograph what is usually conceived of as elusive: the complexity of a conspiracy and the dynamic nature of rumour. To photograph the rumour, I chose to use all genres of photography: staged photographs with actors (mises-en-scène) to represent the imaginary, descriptive snapshots to capture the social interactions that form the everyday theatre of the rumour, portraits to try to capture the emotions and embody the subjects of the investigation because the rumour is populated and spread by individuals. The modalities are only identifiable a posteriori, and still the way I evoke them here is a reconstruction, full of justifications and rationalizations that betray the multiple improvisations and errors committed.

Joschka Philipps: For me, the concept of 'modalities' would mean more generally and simply that one thing can manifest itself in various different ways; the term highlights for me a multiplicity that is usually absorbed by a concept. Let us take conspiracy theories, for instance. Many authors highlight the 'heterodox' modality of conspiracy theorizing, understood as a social critique against an orthodox mainstream[27]. Others emphasize the ironic or sarcastic modality of conspiracy theorizing,[28] where conspiracy theories are basically political gossip, playing with scandalous exaggerations to entertain and capture people's attention. What strikes me is that most analysts have adopted this concept as if the phenomenon, i.e., conspiracy theories, was clearly identifiable in social life. As soon as you do fieldwork on the topic, you realize how difficult it is to identify an isolated "conspiracy theory". What you have is conversations between people, and sometimes someone may voice a suspicion about the secret machinations of some powerful group. This can be meant in such a variety of 'modalities' that it ultimately begs the question whether we are talking about different modalities of the same thing or about different things altogether? Moreover, as we could witness in Guinea, however, where the concept is not used in public discourse,[29] or in Côte d'Ivoire for that matter,[30] conspiracy theorizing is ubiquitous but so interwoven with other forms of political discourse to the point where it is hardly detectable as a specific modality.

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[27] See Anton, Schetsche, and Walter (2014); Fassin (2021); Latour (2004).

[28] See Birchall (2006); Knight (2002).

[29] See Philipps and Sagnane (2023).

[30] See Boukari and Philipps (2023).

That being said, I think Aurélien's 'non-modality' of photography is not too different from an inductive modality in sociological research. The key difference may be the photographer's potential of harnessing the spontaneity of inspiration: that he may suddenly see something, meet a person, or capture a situation that inspires, or sensitizes him to new modalities. A sociologist would have to contemplate, read, compare and study the existing fields of research before carefully planning a new modality and putting it in place.

2 2019: Stumbling into the "field"

Joschka Philipps: The choice of the Republic of Guinea as a central case study was self-evident, for me especially because I had worked in and on Guinea since 2009, and for Aurélien especially as a former historian. Guinea's history is indeed crucial for shedding a postcolonial perspective on conspiracy theories. In 1958, Guinea was the only French colony in sub-Saharan Africa that overwhelmingly voted against being part of the Communauté Française. De Gaulle was furious,[31] and the French secret service tried hard to overthrow the new regime of Sékou Touré. Guinea was thus increasingly ruled against the backdrop of a "complot permanent", a permanent plot, by neo-colonial forces, both real and imaginary. The question of whether Sékou Touré used the "complot permanent" narrative (or conspiracy theory) as a pretext for totalitarian repression, or whether the conspiracy was real and the totalitarian nature of the regime justified, has never been officially addressed under subsequent regimes. While both stances are true in a way, there has hardly been any room for mediating between the two radical positions. Sékou Touré tends to be seen either as a hero or as a tyrant,[32] or is simply forgotten. Given the ubiquity of such unsettled questions in Guinean history, author Tierno Monenembo speaks of a "total confusion" that permeates the Guinean public sphere.[33] However, after Brexit, Donald Trump, and the various conspiracy theories about Covid-19, such total confusion is clearly no longer a hallmark of Guinea. As regrettable as one may find the alleged trend towards "post-truth politics",[34] it has the merit of deconstructing the self-righteous myth of 'rationality' that the so-called global north has claimed for itself since the Enlightenment.[35] This allows us to treat Guinea, and African cases more generally, no longer as an exception. The challenge for us was to turn the historically informed idea into an interdisciplinary practice, and to find collective entry points into the 'field', which was obviously not Guinea's history, but contemporary Conakry, Guinea's capital city.

Aurélien Gillier: The apprehension of the urban space of Conakry constituted my entry in the field. It was a matter of becoming familiar with the territory that would be the scene of the photographic investigation. During this preparatory work, I followed Joschka to the field, meeting his interlocutors and respondents. To meet his subjects who were not yet—or perhaps never would be—mine. A first evidence appeared: researcher and photographer do not necessarily

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[31] Jacques Foccart, de Gaulle's middleman for "African Affairs" cites the French President as asking to "do anything to overthrow Sékou Touré" (RFI & FIDH 2018: 115).

[32] See Kaké (1987).

[33] See Monenembo (2018).

[34] See Flood (2016).

[35] See Macamo (2014, 2022b).

approach the same subject through the same 'subjects'. The obvious discomfort of this first fieldwork is found in my first series of photographs. They are abstract shots, usually taken with my phone rather than a camera, and show my difficulty of interacting with people. I look for traces of rumour in my daily life (in cabs, in the streets, in the city, in the urban design), the way ordinary noise and anger circulate. I try to capture the pulse of the "rumour of the city" as Eugene Smith (1958: 99) put it.

Series 1: Conakry, September 2019
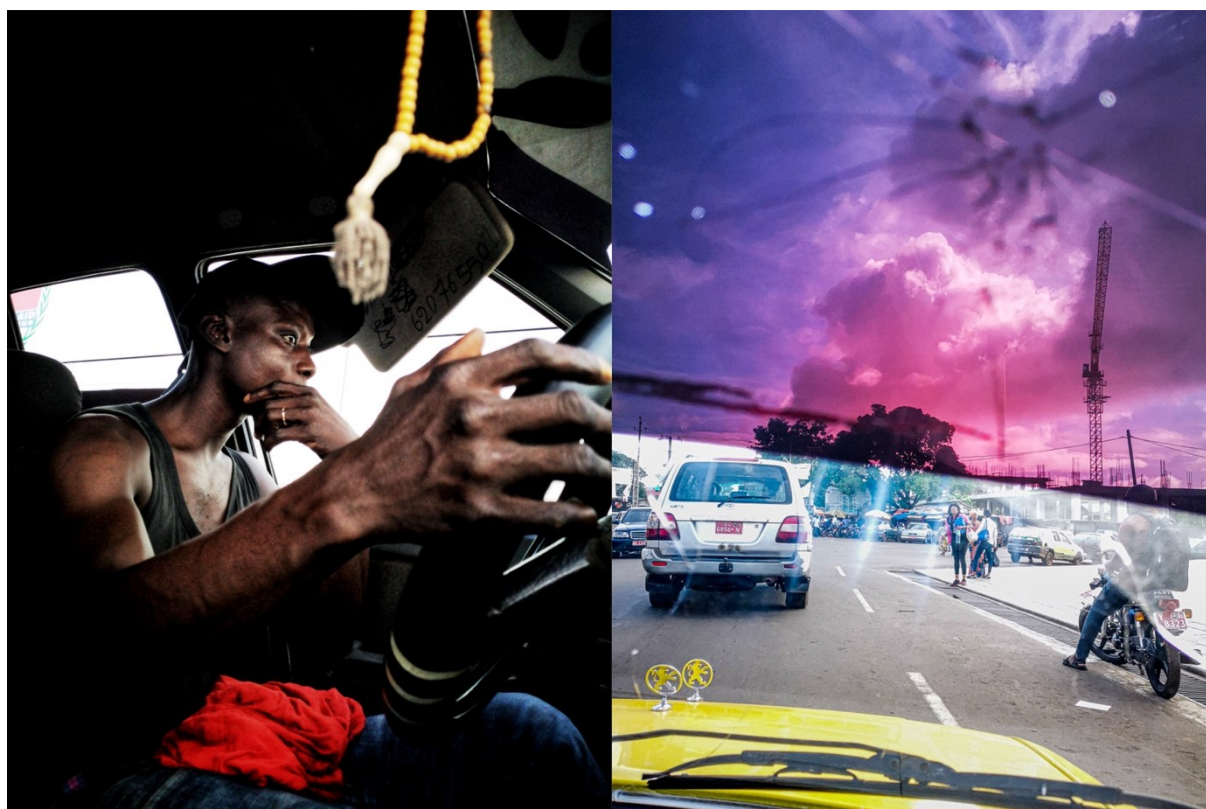
Figure 2: Conakry traffic. Guinea 2019.

Joschka Philipps: There is something extremely photogenic about Conakry's urbanity that I always felt incapable of capturing. Aurélien's photographs of this urbanity thus never appeared to me as a failure but as a confirmation of how important images were to provide a visual sense of what we wanted to describe.[36] Neither did I think Aurélien would find it difficult to interact with people. His ability to fade into the background of a situation (his tallness and our whiteness notwithstanding) inspired a certain awe in me, and sometimes an awkwardness of being observed in the 'field' myself. Aurélien mirrored to me, like others before, the strangeness of the sociologist's or anthropologist's relation to people, who are often friends and informants at the same time, and whose closeness and trust bear a strategic utility. Our conversations, mostly with

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[36] See Schindler 2018: 117.

journalists, intellectuals, and academics, friends and acquaintances from my previous research trips, were part of such information gathering. Seeking information and interpretations from them about the 'politics of the unknown' (rather than immersing ourselves in the phenomenon) highlights a methodological difficulty in the ethnographic study of conspiracy theorizing.[37] In contrast to the widespread trope of conspiracist milieus, most statistical analyses show that beliefs in conspiracy theories are spread quite evenly across strata and social categories[38] and I explicitly wanted to avoid associating them with a certain milieu, least of all with Conakry's self-proclaimed "ghetto youth", whom I had previously worked with and written about with regards to their role in urban protests.[39] In turn, I have struggled tremendously to find an anchor-point for studying the elusive phenomenon in any concrete way.

3 2022: Souloumou souloumoui and the biographics of Nana

Joschka Philipps: As our interdisciplinary project evolved, I found myself in the role of a curator of different research and artistic modalities. Since becoming part of the Africa Multiple Cluster in 2021, the team had expanded and was joined, amongst others, by two doctoral students, various artists and associated researchers. In our project on Guinea, Guinean anthropologist and doctoral student Saïkou Oumar Sagnane took on multiple roles: that of a self-reflexive ethnographer of our project, of a connector between the arts and social sciences, and also as a critical challenger of the concepts we worked with. Sagnane suggested, for instance, to use the Soussou[40] concept of "souloumou souloumoui" (in French: "les bruits qui courent"; in English: "the sounds that circulate"), which was more common in Conakry and had a less negative connotation than 'conspiracy theories' or 'rumours.'

The term souloumou souloumoui refers to information that is usually given discreetly by word of mouth, in whispers or behind someone's back. "Wo na minsé souloumou souloumou fé?" ("What are you up to against me?") is a common expression of someone who hears whispers from others and suspects that they are talking about him. More broadly, we can think of these 'sounds' as an instant social reaction to an event or a condition that preoccupies a good number of people, whether within the extended family, a neighbourhood or village, the national or even transnational public. The speed with which these sounds or rumours spread through different networks very often exceeds that of news disseminated by radio, television or the written press. Furthermore, compared with radio, newspapers or television, souloumou souloumoui are less controlled and more inclusive in the sense that they spread across all social strata, regardless of internet access and literacy levels, and take different forms depending on the social context. The upshot of souloumou souloumoui was that of turning towards a more general concern with the circulation of information, and also made me realize that my underlying research questions about

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[37] See Rakopoulos (2022).

[38] See, for instance, Brotherton (2015); Uscinski et al. (2020), or my own survey of 612 respondents in Guinea (Philipps and Sagnane 2023). For a counter position that insists on gender differences in conspiracy theorizing, i.e., on women being significantly less likely than men to believe in Covid-19-related conspiracy theories, see Cassese, Farhart, and Miller (2020).

[39] See Philipps (2013).

[40] Soussou is the lingua franca of Maritime Guinea and the capital city Conakry.

'conspiracy theories' emerged from a clearly Western or Northern context. Asking how people make sense of politics that are too inaccessible to be known and too significant to be ignored or left uncertain, for instance, frames transparency as a political norm and opacity as a problem.[41] This underestimates the insouciance, as Sagnane termed it, that comes with living in a political context where power is routinely veiled and secret, replete with conspiracies that are known only to the initiated.

On a methodological level, while curating different research and artistic modalities, I had yet to find my own modality of researching and theorizing. The more I got caught up in conceptual debates, the more I found myself yearning for doing a concrete empirical study of the lived realities of what Boltanski (2011: 56) calls the "radical uncertainty" of the social world. Such a study, I figured, would need to describe how actual individuals (rather than constructed social categories) experience radical uncertainty, while allowing for the radical uncertainty on the part of the researcher to emerge as well (Berthelot 1996). Finally, since my research question turned out to be transnational (or trans-cultural), I also needed a transnational object of analysis that would allow me to follow and shift between different registers and conceptualizations of the social world.

I do not have a satisfying explanation for why it took me so long to realize that a long-cherished writing project, sitting patiently in the back of my mind since 2014, provided exactly that. Nana B.'s biography is replete with ambiguities and uncertainties and enmeshed with souloumou souloumoui, rumours and conspiracy theories.[42] Her transnational life—she was born in Conakry and currently lives in France—revolves around questions of economic emancipation, womanhood and political power, and involves myriad epistemological perspectives, ranging from mystical and spiritual conceptualizations, various religious worldviews, to secular, agnostic, and atheist frameworks, and rationalistic-scientific approaches, all of them routinely overlapping across contradictions to fit the given task at hand (see Philipps 2023). The conspiracist elements in this complex array of worldviews result not least from her concrete experiences of Guinean politics. As a transnational drug courier under the regime of Lansana Conté, an NGO founder in the context of development politics, and a muse of political Big Men, she has had first-hand experiences of the Machiavellian kind of politics that necessitate certain forms of secrecy and conspiracy to get things done.

I met Nana in 2013 in a Lebanese-owned café in Kaloum, Conakry's colonial, political and economic city centre, located at the tip of the peninsular capital. A friend introduced me to her after we were coming from an EU-organized debate on youth—I was all dressed up in suit pants. Nana and I had hardly exchanged more than five sentences when she asked me whether I was ready to go elsewhere. What followed was a tour through what she would describe as "Le Power": the city centre's intricate infrastructure of Guinean parapolitics. These concealed spaces, ranging from backyard sheds to bars, littoral hangouts and restaurants, assembled Kaloum's politicians, black-market peddlers, soldiers and gendarmes, businessmen and sex workers, for various pastimes to be shared, deals to be made, schemes to be concocted, or simply to watch television

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[41] See Comaroff and Comaroff (2003).

[42] Nana and the people mentioned in her narrative and shown in our photos have agreed for their stories to be shared in academic texts like this one. We still decided to keep Nana's family name concealed.

in a milieu-transcending insouciance that I had not witnessed in Conakry before. Nana provided, in that regard, an intriguing contrast to my previous work, which revolved around the masculine juvenile world of the ghetto and its anti-government protests in Conakry's banlieue area.

Series 4: Conakry, March 2022

Figure 3: The burden of history. Guinea 2022

Aurélien was immediately up for making the biography a central piece of our project. We visited Nana in the French city she lived in and one week later travelled together to Conakry, where we also met up with Sagnane. Sharing Nana as a concrete focal point (or refracting diamond, as Aurélien put it) was a breakthrough for our ability to transform our interdisciplinary modality into a transdisciplinary one. The 'data' was plenty and yet concentrated in one person's life and interactions. Her radical openness and generosity to us, and of course vis-à-vis her various social circles of family, friends, "tontons", and spontaneous acquaintances we met in following her, allowed for a kind of collective and reciprocal observation to emerge between Nana, Aurélien, myself, and whoever was with us. It helped, in this regard, that Nana took ownership of our project and also made it hers. As the story's hero and our guide, she developed entry points to various spaces in Conakry we had not dreamed of entering, and certainly not with a camera. And yet, she also exposed her fragility, which Aurélien helped me to see in her, by putting herself into complex and difficult biographical situations, such as visiting formerly close friends and family members whom she had avoided to meet. While her biography concerns her actual true life, it also straddles the divide between fact and fiction, truth and imagination. Nana's rich repertoire of idioms in this

regard ("Même atamara atanara » [Même si c'est pas ça, c'est ça »]; « je ne sais pas si c'est vrai ou pas ; en tout cas, je l'ai vécu »)[43] hint at this complexity.

Aurélien Gillier: To embody rumour by starting with individuals seemed fundamental to me. Joschka's investigation of Nana's life trajectory offered a new way of understanding the imaginary world of conspiracy and rumour. As mentioned above, this biographical investigation also allowed us to truly cross our sociological and photographic views and methods. The long-standing relationship of trust between Joschka and Nana facilitated my entry into the field while assigning me a peripheral position in this pairing. This in-between position is an undeniable asset for the photographer, who can observe in complete freedom, but it also introduces a disruptive element into the setting: the sociologist. For me, it is not a question of reporting on the investigation but on Nana, and thus of taking Joschka, an essential pillar of the interaction, out of the frame. The sociological and photographic investigation here take opposite paths: for me it is not a question of capturing and describing the 'reality' of a situation but of telling a story that resonates, in whatever way, with universal themes and concerns. The photographic narrative does not intervene as an illustration of the research but must keep its own autonomy and interpretative force. The relationship with reality introduced by the presence of the sociologist thus upsets the quest for the imaginary.

Figure 4: Untitled, Guinea 2022.

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[43] In English: "That's it, even if it's not "; "I don't know if it's true or not; in any case, I experienced it."

The above photograph, for instance, was taken in Conakry during a reunion between Nana, who has been living in France for several years, and a former friend who was a sex worker. In the interaction between the two women, Nana is in a dominant position because of her social status and because she is accompanied by two white friends. Their glances and gestures show mutual respect but also the battle that takes place before our eyes, between promises made by one and lessons given by the other. With Joschka, we are spectators of a scene that we observe in different ways. The sociologist listens to the words, observes the gestures, tonalities and body positions. For my part, I ask myself how to photograph the scene between the two women. I observe their movements, the light, I watch the scene and background, and I keep coming up against an element in the background: the sociologist. If I were documenting the investigation, I could have introduced him into my frame, but that is not my goal. To find another angle or to tell Joschka to move would mean to run the risk of breaking the intensity of the interaction that is taking place. If we are actors in this scene by our presence, we must remain passive observers: immobile, silent. The sociologist will undoubtedly draw data from it. Me a failed photo.

Representing a life requires diversifying the register of images by following Nana to her family and to her friends, at work, in her public and private life. In the collaboration with Nana, it was decided from the start that some of the photos I would take would be for her own use. I take on the role of 'wedding and family photographer' and try to respond to her orders. On these pictures, Nana's relatives show happy, smiling, frozen faces. They pose in groups, wave their hands, show that they are posing for the photographer. These photographs are essential because they are the ones that Nana will publish on her social networks and share with friends. This work is like a costume: it legitimizes my presence, defuses potential mistrust, and is part of the give-and-take inherent in any social relationship. It also allows me to enter easily into the intimacy of Nana who imposes my presence on her entourage. But this dress is also a straitjacket from which it is difficult to escape: Nana's relatives automatically pose as soon as they see me pointing the camera. So I accumulate pictures for her, not for our project. In the world of photography—and more recently in research—the question of the agreement of the photographed subjects has been much discussed. If this agreement is fundamental to enter the field, it is just as fundamental to get rid of it in order to capture the immediacy and improvisation of a given situation. As a photographer it is not always to represent the world as its subjects would like it to be, but also to open the doors of the imaginary, to break the usual codes, to question our certainties: those of the photographer, of the photographed, and of the spectators.

Another complexity: Nana consciously challenges my codes of photographic investigation. She imposes herself in the settings I had planned, bursts into the frame, transforms the meaning of the image by her presence. She refuses to confine herself to the role of an intermediary and conquers the image. She is defiant: are we not making her biography? Totally different images are born. In my work on the National Museum of Conakry and the traces of the past, Nana introduces herself into history. As a female figure and boldly bling-bling, she reverses the codes, and makes absurd, the grandeur of the bust of the colonizer Georges Poiret (Lieutenant-Governor of Guinea) and the smallness of the father of independence Sékou Touré. Adorned with a beret that she borrowed from a customs officer, she invites herself into this masculine history of the colonial and post-colonial order, into a history of violence that her pink jacket disrupts. She imposes herself in my visual narration and then leaves as if nothing had happened.

In sum, my photographic investigation is ultimately a matter of improvisation, trial and error and permanent adaptation to the interactions on the ground with the people I wish to photograph. This way of doing things is more like DIY than a well-defined protocol. By choosing to let myself be guided by my subjects, I take the risk of letting myself be overwhelmed and losing myself in their representations. The feeling of failure that arises is undoubtedly the result of my loss of control. But this loss of control seems necessary to me in order to open new doors and follow unexpected threads. This type of photographic investigation implies long term work. The skein of the different tracks followed only makes sense afterwards during the different editing phases which allow to build the story and to prepare the next stays. The 'failures' sometimes find a place.

4 Conclusion

If "concepts hide more than they reveal" (Macamo 2022a), one promise of the concept 'modalities' is to acknowledge the multiplicity of realities covered by a given concept. 'Conspiracy theories,' as we have argued in the first part of this chapter, can be grasped in infinitely more complex ways than the concept suggests. Their modalities are contingent on the contexts in which they are practiced and the contexts in which they are talked about. And as we have seen, scientists may arguably be the worst-placed to say something insightful about conspiracy theories, for it is science, and notably sociology, that has distinguished itself historically in opposition to them. Though there are notable exceptions (e.g., Boltanski 2014; White 2007), most scientists have a hard time letting go of treating conspiracy theories as "the other." That being said, embracing the concept 'modalities' is not without risks. For there is, in our different and limited understandings of the term, a paradox. If we agree that concepts, like metaphors, do not reveal the real world but shape our perceptions of it (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), advertising new concepts as answers to epistemological problems ultimately proceeds by the same conceptualist logics that our reference to 'modalities' seeks to subvert. Shifting the conceptual struggles to ever-higher levels of abstraction then bears the risk of being increasingly scholastic about the things we care about.

Interdisciplinarity, as we have introduced it in the second part of this chapter, may serve as a more practical approach to modalities. Engaging with an object of analysis through different disciplinary lenses and through different methods enables an opening up to the different modalities of that object. It demonstrates and provides an understanding of its multiplicity and contingency in terms of the multiple possibilities of relating to it—leaving open whether or not 'it' is an ontological or epistemological category, or both.[44] When interdisciplinary approaches include non-textual and non-scientific approaches, moreover, they highlight that these possibilities of relating extend far beyond the multiplicity of conceptual apparatuses and theoretical frameworks. As Macamo and Weber (2021) argue, such "progressive" interdisciplinarity is predicated upon combining "unlikely bedfellows" whose differences are the starting point of reflection, which means that interdisciplinarity may ultimately not even be about scientific "disciplines" but about contrasting views and approaches.

Indeed, if modalities of theorizing and researching are united in the motivation of gaining "a better understanding of the world" (Butter 2018: 53), interdisciplinary work reveals how such an

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[44] On this matter, we side with Simondon's philosophy of the transindividual (Combes 2013), arguing for a relational perspective that links ontology and epistemology (Simondon 1989, 1995, 2005).

understanding is always a function of the respective theory employed. In the highly fragmented realm of the social sciences and humanities (see Berthelot 2010:174), there is no objective 'outside' from where to evaluate if a certain understanding is 'better' than another (Lawson 2001). For sure, certain theories are more useful for carving out certain aspects of a given phenomenon than others. But the assumption of having a better general understanding is inherent in the theoretical perspective itself, and often boils down to confirmation bias, i.e. finding evidence that fits our preconceptions (Nickerson 1998). While conspiracy theorizing is routinely accused of particularly high degrees of confirmation bias (Brotherton 2015: 221–39), the problem concerns all modalities of theorizing, and interdisciplinarity ideally make us aware of that.

In this article, we reflected in particular on the interdisciplinary relation between sociology and photography, the different research modalities that each approach brings to the table, and on the different objects and concepts that the photographer and the sociologist grappled with, changing them considerably along the way. Neither photography nor sociology were confined to one respective modality of research, but adapted their multiple repertoires in relation to changing objects of analysis. This relation to objects is important when asking what changed the research endeavour from an interdisciplinary into a transdisciplinary one. On the one hand, it may simply have taken time for the sociologist and the photographer to transcend their disciplinary boundaries and to arrive at a third, transdisciplinary modality. On the other hand, the object of analysis seemed to have played an important role as well, for the two perspectives ultimately converged when focusing on the biography of Nana. This object, moreover, is also a subject, i.e., a person, and perhaps another discipline altogether, who allowed the sociologist and the photographer to experience, beyond the confines of their respective fields, what they were after when entering the politics of the unknown.

Our inter- and transdisciplinary work on conspiracy theories follows a multi-modal principle that Halloran (1983) calls "critical eclecticism": the attempt of combining different perspectives on a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, in which each perspective critically reflects on capacities and blind spots of the other. The underlying assumption is that our heuristic tools structure not only what we see in the world, but also what we ignore and what remains unknown to us. This is evident not only in interdisciplinary research, but should also be kept in mind when sociologists study conspiracy theories. In a context like Guinea, where parapolitical actors are at the heart of large-scale collusion and transnational extraction, a critically eclectic perspective is two-directional: the problem it evokes is not only that conspiracy theories are too actor-centred and seek to personify structures of power that are much broader than actual networks of people. The problem is also that most sociological theories focus so much on broad anonymous structures— and on how to conceptualize them—that they make fine-grained research on actual networks of collusion very difficult and seemingly un-academic (Cribb 2009). As to photography and sociology, a photographic approach illustrates, quite literally, the complexity and ambiguity of concrete situations that elude sociological capture (Simone 2022), while sociological approaches can go beyond the immediacy of the photographic snapshot and make broader arguments across specific instances. In sum, then, the problem is choosing one perspective without assuming its partial nature (Collins 1999: 290). Working with modalities as a guiding heuristic angle highlights this partial nature of accessing and understanding phenomena, and this, for us, is the most valuable upshot of the concept modalities.

Figure 5: Milky way. Guinea 2022.

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Arguing for Integrative Medicine in Diversity

Appraising Diagnosis in Western and Yoruba Health Care Systems

Akinmayowa Akin-Otiko

Abstract

Modes of relating to diseases are visible in the practice of Yoruba Traditional Medicine (YTM). Modes exists because of the belief in the dual existence of forces in nature, there is the spiritual as well as the material mode of existence. For the Yoruba, life situations, including diseases are often interpreted from a dualistic position. 'Thinking' in dual categories affects prescriptions and treatments; this is noticeable when comparing diagnosis of difficult conditions in Western health care to what is done in the Yoruba traditional health care system. Diseases in Western medicine are mainly caused by explainable causes making treatment explainable, whereas, in Yoruba traditional health care, there are explainable and unexplainable causes and treatment of diseases. The thinking pattern in these two health care approaches makes the idea of integrative medicine interesting. This study highlights and compares the thinking (diagnosis) and actions (treatment and prescription) in Western and Yoruba Traditional health care systems with particular focus on somatoform disorder. There were key informant interviews of selected Western health care practitioners regarding diagnosis and treatment of somatoform disorder; these responses were compared to modes of diagnosis and treatment in Yoruba health care system. Results show possible link between thinking and acting in the area of health care, thereby making a case for relational and integrative modes of health care as scholars reconfigure African Studies.

Keywords: diagnosis, health care, integrative, somatoform disorder, Western, Yoruba

1 Introduction

I would like to begin this paper using a known situation; during the soccer match between Finnland and Denmark at the Euro 2020, a News Paper, *Premium Times* (2021) reported 'Panic as Danish star Eriksen slumps on the pitch'. Christian Erikson slumps on the field of play, and western medical officials thought he had a cardiac arrest. The same experience of Christian Erikson can be diagnosed in another way based on the thinking emanating from different medical paradigms. The worldview of a people defines the thinking process and this necessarily guides the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. In the Yoruba medical context, there is the possibility of Christian Erikson being diagnosed as one afflicted by some evil force. This type of diagnosis is perfectly understood by Yoruba because of the types of disease aetiologies that exist in their healthcare practice.

Although contemporary medicine argues for the removal of dychotomies in the methods of healthcare, the practice of medicine among the Yoruba still allows the same disease to be interpreted from two perspectives to achieve the goal of integrative medicine. That is the same condition can be diagnosed as cardiac arrest or a spiritual attack because of a dual disease aetiology. This, will be integrating the explainable with the inexplainable methods. Among the Yoruba, diagnosis takes on a dual perspective because symptoms are either explainable or not (Akin-Otiko 2018). For the explainable, there is *àìsàn ara* (bodily ailment) (Jegede A. S. 2010) on the one hand, and for the unexplainable, there is *àmódi* (somatoform disorder - ailments that are difficult to diagnose) (Akin-Otiko 2018)*.*

A condition is àìsàn ara if the ailment affects only the body, such ailments can be easily diagnosed or explained; the treatment is herbal and explainable. This is very similar to what happens in western health care practice. In the cases of àìsàn ara, diagnosis does not immediately follow a dualistic thinking, it is when health conditions become difficult that the dualistic method of thinking becomes prominent. The "Yoruba view àìsàn [ailment] as a pathological problem" (Jegede A. S. 2010: 158). But if the condition is àmódi, the treatment will require more than herbs. For àmódi, there is the need to appease the spiritual forces identified to be responsible for the ailment. Àmódi which is somatoform disorder are conditions that are considered to have spiritual and not natural causes (Akin-Otiko 2018). For example, there is a cult (Ṣòpànná cult) that is believed to be responsible for the prevention of smallpox in Yoruba (Jegede, O. 2010). It has been argued that the function of traditional Yoruba religion is to ward off evil occurrences such as sickness and in most critical periods to heal the victims (Osunwole 1989). It is in cases like this that integrative medicine is evident.

The need for integrative medicine exists because diagnosis could have been that Christian was attacked by someone he offended or someone who is not too happy with his position and role in the team. Quoting Ayodele (2002), scholars noted that "diseases mostly revolve around witchcraft/sorcery, gods or ancestors, natural, as well as inherited" (Ezekwesili-Ofili and Okaka 2019). In this case, rather than respond with the best of technologies alone, there will be divination to find out who Christian offended and what is required to appease the aggrieved person(s).

This speaks to the reality of integrative medicine, that is, the bringing together "of different approaches, treatments, and institutions that people use to maintain health or treat illness"

(Khalikova 2023). This is developing on medical pluralism that is refered to as the "differentially designed and conceived medical systems' in a single society" (Janzen 1978: xviii). Integrative medicine has developed to include systems of health care across "local systems (folk medicine), regional systems (like Unani medicine or traditional Chinese medicine), and cosmopolitan medicine" (Dunn 1976).

The contemporary acceptance of integrative medicine takes place when different health care systems understand and agree on the diagnosis of symptoms as Khalikova (2023) noted that "cancer patients might complement chemotherapy with acupuncture and religious healing; or women who want to get pregnant might combine hormonal treatment with home remedies and Yoga." Complementary medicine builds on pluralism of health care where disease aetiologies are different. In the case of the Yoruba health care system, the effects of supernatural forces and spiritual afflictions are accepted as possible disease aetiology along with the naturally caused diseases. This is because "in African traditional setting, there was always an explanation as to why someone was suffering from a certain disease at a particular time" (Ezekwesili-Ofili and Okaka 2019). Differences in the understanding of disease aetiologies makes it important to listen and understand African traditional medicine as a different but useful health care system. If this is not done, it can lead to loss of the value of integrative system, as well as exclude the role of Africa traditional medicine especially when diseases have causes that are outside the scope of Western health care.

The dualistic reality in the worldview of the Yoruba enhanced the complementary indigeous responses to COVID-19; they substantially regarded COVID-19 as a condition that was both àìsàn ara and àmódi. COVID-19 was believed to have dual causation, the explainable and the inexplainable, the natural as well the supernatural causation. This dualistic kind of thinking resulted in the integrative responses that Yoruba indigenous medicine practitioners provided in response to COVID-19 (Akin-Otiko 2020). Many used known recipies for boosting their immune system, and to complement that, there were consultations through divinations to address the possible spiritual dimention of COVID-19. This mirrors the position "that perception of illness is affected or influenced by belief systems in African societies" (Jegede, A. S. 2010: 77).

In the case of COVID-19, the non-pharmaceutical protocols such as social distancing, use of facemask, avoidance of handshakes, etc. were found to be useful, however, there were sacrifices made by the practitioners of indigenous medicine to appease the spiritual causes of COVID-19. This integrative acting has placed indigenous medicine on the front burner of many critiques, particularly because indigenous health care is not yet seen as playing a complementary role. The rejection of the dual disease aetiology does not remove the fact that every culture responds to health care concerns based on the accepted disease aetiologies (Akin-Otiko 2018).

Contemporary research in health care considers pluralism of modes that result in integrative medicine, however, problem with African health care mode often emanates because scholars with competence in western care reject African paradigm that they do not understand. This study is aimed at providing a basis for complementary modes of health care even when diagnosis are different. The differences in the way western and Yoruba health care systems respond to the same condition does not exclude the possibility of complementarity when holistic health care is the focus. Appraisal of modes in health care is necessary for the appreciation of multiplicity of ideas especially as it applies to the western and Yoruba Traditional Medicine mode.

2 Theory

This study adopts a principle of deriving theories from data gathered from the field, people's lived experiences and responses from interviews. This method of theorizing has been referred to as grounded theory. Grounded theory (GT) is a research method concerned with the generation of theory, (Glaser and Strauss 1967) which is 'grounded' in data that has been systematically collected and analysed (Strauss and Corbin 1994). GT has been used to uncover social processes, that is, principles that guide social relationships and behaviours of groups (Crooks 2001). GT was developed in California, USA by Glaser and Strauss during their study— 'Awareness of Dying' (Glaser and Strauss 1967). It is believed that GT will help this study to systematically develop what people think and believe about health care and diseases in general.

One of the grounded hypothesis derived from this study is, 'Ohun ti o wa leyi eji, o ju eta lo', "there is more to life than meets the eyes". This hypothesis emerged from the fact that the Yoruba believe that there are two realities operational in the world, the visible and the invisible. There is always something more to perceive or realize beyond what has been manifested. In the case of diseases, it is believed that there are things that may be responsible for conditions of patients that the sequence of symptoms may not capture or reveal. This is the basis for the theory of 'Ohun ti o wa leyi eji, o ju eta lo'. This and more strengthened the basis for medical pluralism to become a theoretical framework which "was developed in the second half of the twentieth century to examine local medical traditions in their diversity, co-existence, and competition, especially with biomedicine" (Khalikova 2023).

If there is a western understanding of diseases that can be understood exhaustively by what is revealed, it means that there is no need to look further than the symptoms, whereas in the Yoruba paradigm of health care, there can be more to the symptoms that have been presented. This difference between western and Yoruba indigenous health care paradigms, makes a case for integrative modes of care especially because one mode relates to the other to achieve adequate health care process.

3 Method and data

Data was gathered in 2013 and a post thesis fieldwork in 2022 validated the data. Twenty-four patients with àmódi - somatoform disorder (ailments that are difficult to diagnose) were selected across the six Southwestern states of Nigeria based on established diagnosis and the fact that they had been to formal government hospitals, only to be discharged and told to find some help traditionally. Patients were identified through selected Babalawo (diviners) using snowball method. All the conditions were first diagnosed based on the understanding of dualism in disease aetiologies and treatments were administered with a 100% recovery rate. This was possible because dualism exists in the understanding of disease aetiologies among the Yoruba. For this study, seven cases that represent types or groups of diseases out of the twenty-four somatoform disorder cases were selected. Each of the selected cases represents one of the seven identified classes or disease aetiologies among the Yoruba. These disease aetiologies represent the modes of thinking and the types of treatment that were provided. The findings of the study showed seven different groups of disease causation; these groupings also determined the type of treatment that were provided. These seven diagnoses and treatments found among the Yoruba were compared

with possible diagnosis and treatment of the same conditions as known and practiced by Western trained medical Doctors. The findings show how modes of thinking (diagnosis) impact actions (treatment) in the two health care paradigms, this makes a case for modalities in the methods of responding to reality, especially diseases that are interpreted within the worldview of the Yoruba and the need to decolonise African Studies.

4 Group view of cases

This group was developed to represent the established possible categories of disease aetiology in Yoruba indigenous medicine. And each represents the grouping in the fieldwork of Akin-Otiko (2013).

**Table 1: Possible aetiologies, diagnosis and recovery time in YTM
(adapted from Akin-Otiko 2013).**

Grp	Patient	Age	Sex	Religion	Time before treatment	Time of recovery	Condition/ symptom	Diagnosis
1	A	36	F	Muslim	10 yrs	1 mnths	Always felt heat in the stomach, could not get pregnant	*Odù Òsá-Èṣù: Òrìṣà: Ìjà Èsù-* Attack from *Èsù.*
2	C	25	M	Christian	19 months	2 mnths	Skin ulcer	*Odù Òfún-Òdí: Àì gbọ́ ìkìlọ̀ -* refusal to heed warning.
3	G	40	M	Christian	5 yrs	1 day	Could not have erection	*Odù Òdí- Ògúndá: Aya ọ̀run-* spiritual wife.
4	M	32	M	ATR	4 yrs	6 mnths	Coughing out blood	*Odù Ọ̀sé-Òsá: Ìdúró pé òun ní agbára -* daring others.
5	Q	28	M	Muslim	1 yrs	3 days	Audible birdlike noise from stomach, loss of weight	*Odù Ìrosùn- Ọ̀sé: Ọwọ́ ayé* (attack from witches)
6	T	40	M	Muslim	2 yrs	15 days	Paralysis	*Odù Èjì-Ogbè: Àṣedànù nítorí pé kò béèrè -* did not make inquiry.
7	V	60	F	Christian	Few mnths	1 week	Strange actions	*Odù Ògúndá-atóríṣe: Owú-jíjẹ -* jealousy.

Group One: Patient with a condition traced to Òrìṣà (Divinity)

This is made up of only one patient (A). This patient complained that she always felt heat in her stomach. This condition made her go to a number of government hospitals. She was tested for ulcer, high blood pressure, and some other tests to find out the reason for this condition. She was also made to go through different tests to ascertain why she could not get pregnant. According to her, "the doctors always told me that they did not find anything from the result of the tests." She was told on different occasions to go home, rest and not worry about anything, but the heat she felt in her stomach never got better.

Disease Aetiology: The symptoms manifested by this patient were indicative of physical disorder. This informed the choice of tests that were done, but the babaláwo through divination – Odù Òsá-Èṣù – found the disease aetiology to be Ìjà Èṣù, attack from Èṣù (Akin-Otiko 2013). The Yoruba believe in the existence of malevolent spirits, which are capable of inflicting harm. The harm from any such spirits is refered to as a form of ailment. Divinition helps to identify the source of affliction and the prescription needed for the treatment of the patient.

Group Two: Patient with a condition traced to èèwọ̀ (taboo)

Group two represents diseases caused by taboo. Patient C manifested skin ulcer as his symptom and Ifá divination linked it to breaking of taboos, it was called Àì gbọ́ ìkìlọ̀ (refusal to heed warning). Patient C was suffering from skin ulcer (egbò àdáàjiná). According to the patient, "this wound had lasted for one year and seven months. The wound prevented me from having girlfriends. Women avoided me once they found out that I had the wound that had grown very big and deep." This wound was around the ankle and had started affecting the way he walked. He said "I have been to different hospitals and different tests had been carried out, but nothing indicated the queried causes. I have contemplated suicide on different occasions."

Disease Aetiology: Odù Òfún-Òdí (a divination chapter) indicated àì kò gbọ́ ìkìlọ̀ (refusal of the patient to heed warning from those that had give advise about life choices), which resulted in skin ulcer. This kind of skin ulcer (egbò àdáàjiná) forms a big sore that either starts out as a result of some minor known injury or one may just suddenly notice some irritation on the skin. These injuries do not get healed despite treatment and these kinds of injuries have led to many amputations because they do not respond to treatments; they rather get worse over time (Akin-Otiko 2013).

Group Three: Patient with a condition traced to Orí (one's personality soul)
Group three represents diseases caused by Orí (one's personality's soul), for the Yoruba, there exists a spiritual element to human existence, which is called the Orí). Patient G is a young man who on different occasions had refused to get married; according to him, "I have erectile dysfunction and have gone to different hospitals where tests were carried out to know if I have an infection, weak erection, or if the nerves were not working well." He said he was not born like that, but the doctors found it hard to believe. He had the condition for about five years.

Disease Aetiology: Odù Òdí-Ògúndá (a divination chapter) diagnosed aya ọrun (spiritual wife, which is a condition that prevents patients with such condition from having children) as the cause of the patient's condition (Akin-Otiko 2013). Every babaláwo knows that "it is possible to interfere with àyànmọ [destiny] through the evil machinations of enemies (ọ̀tá)" (Jegede 2002: 324). The

concept of Orí or àyànmọ (destiny) indicates that the Yoruba have an awareness of hereditary conditions, which they refer to as àìsàn tí orí yàn wá sí ayé (diseases believed to have been chosen by one's personal soul from heaven). It is believed that the orí chooses what it wants to become on earth, even the type of affliction that it wants to suffer here on earth. This may include diseases caused by genetic factors. Odù Èjì-ogbè talks about a disease that can exist from generation to generation, this is what is called àyànmọ (destiny) (Akin-Otiko 2013).

Group Four: Patient with a condition traced to ìwà-búburú (bad character)

This group of diseases represent conditions linked to ìwà-búburú (bad character). Patient M coughed and spat out blood for four years. According to him; "I cough a lot and I notice that blood comes out whenever I cough. I am scared it may cost me my life." Odù Ọ̀sé-Òsá diagnosed ìdúró pé òun ní agbára (daring others); that is, the patient bragged that nothing can happen to him.

Disease Aetiology: Ìwà búburú (bad character) was found to have caused the conditions in patient M. Yoruba place a big emphasis on ìwà, which requires every human being to act rightly. It is believed that ìwà rere l' ẹṣọ́ ènìyàn (good behaviour is a noble adornment of human beings), just as ìwà l'ọba àwúre (good behaviour is the most effective source of blessing) (Akin-Otiko 2013). Elebuibon (2000: 51) noted that "Ìwà is a factor, which enables man to accomplish his desires and aspirations. A man may possess good luck. However, if he possesses bad character, the ugly traits of his character will negate his good luck." Such a patient will be asked to return to doing good actions for healing.

Group Five: Patient with a condition traced to Ayé/Àjẹ́ (witches)

Group five patient complained of physical bodies discomfort. Patient Q had problems with blotted stomach for years, but it became a problem when he and people around him could hear some bird-like sound from his stomach (inú kíkùn). He said I have inú kíkùn and along with it I am losing weight and people thought that I had HIV." For a whole year, he ran different tests, but nothing was diagnosed. Odù Ìrosùn-Ọ̀sé diagnosed ọwọ́ ayé (attack from witches). It indicated that the patient belonged to a cult and his members were disturbing him.

Disease Aetiology: Ayé/àjẹ́/àwọn ìyà mi (witches) were found to be responsible for the conditions of patient Q. Ayé (witches) are some human or supernatural beings that are capable of afflicting humans with illness or misfortune. All the babaláwo that were interviewed in this study share a common belief in the existence of Ayé (Akin-Otiko 2013). Parrinder (1976) noted that this disease aetiology is possible because witches are believed to have the power to feast on human souls while their bodies are asleep. "The soul is closely linked to the body, and as the witches devour the spiritual body, so the mortal frame weakens… Pain, paralysis or impotence appears in different members. When the centre of the blood, the heart or liver is reached, then the victim dies" (Parrinder 1976: 127). This has been called "spiritual cannibalism" (Omoyajowo 1998: 317).

Group Six: Patient with a condition traced to àì-kò-béèrè (lack of divination)

Group six has a Patient T that could not walk, he had pain in his knees. The legs looked like they were broken bones. According to him; "I have been to different hospitals and x-rays were taken, but nothing was found. My condition got so bad that I have not walked for about two years. At some point I started losing weight and all they were giving him in the hospitals were sedatives to kill the pain I was having, including pints of blood and drips." Odù Èjì-Ogbè diagnosed Àṣedànù nítorí pé kò béèrè (wastage because he did not make inquiry – For the Yoruba, divination is made before taking significant steps in life, when ignored, one of the consiquences is waste of time or resources). The patient was warned about a certain trip, but ignored the warning.

Disease Aetiology: Àì-kò-béèrè (lack of divination) is a possible disease aetiology in the worldview of the Yoruba, because divination plays a big role not just in diagnosis of diseases and conditions, but also as a preventive measure when it is done at the beginning of every significant stage in life. Such moments reveal what has to be done to avoid diseases, mistakes, misfortunes, etc. When one refuses to ask, then diseases are caused or not prevented.

Among the Yoruba, it is believed that "on the third day after a child's birth, the oracle must be consulted" (Idowu 1996: 192). This rite is called Ẹsè nbálè/Ìkọsè-wáyé (inquiries at birth to find out what a child will become), and it is meant to find out what sort of child the infant is, and what destiny it has chosen. If there are things to be corrected, the rite will guide and direct the process of correcting whatever is wrong. It will also help to know what is meant to be the child's taboo so that it can be avoided. That way, sickness or conditions that may affect the future of the child is prevented.

Group Seven: Patients with conditions traced to ìrírí ayé (life experience, these are conditions that emanate from human interactions with other humans)

Patient V was a businesswoman who was said to have been doing very well in her market. According to her; "I suddenly started to behave strangely, frequently complained of fever. Tests revealed nothing about what was wrong with me. People tell me also that I am not coordinated in my speech." The hospitals recommended psychiatric treatments. Odù Ògúndá-at'óríṣe found Owú-jíjẹ (jealousy), attack from the market where she sold her goods (Akin-Otiko 2013).

Disease Aetiology: Ìrírí ayé (life experience) is considered to be a kind of disease aetiology. Yoruba believe that 'Ilé ayé, ilé ogun ni' (the world is a battlefield). This means that everyone should be prepared for any eventuality in the world. Humans are definitely going to struggle for things, positions and opportunities, and it is only normal for the fittest to outwit the weak ones. One is expected to fortify oneself and one's belonging because others will struggle for them. Diagnosis revealed that life experiences positioned patients V to be envied, and this led to the conditions she suffered.

5 Arguing for integrative methods of diagnosis: YTM and Western health care

The above diagnosis and prescription in YTM are significantly different from what is obtainable in the Western framework as will be shown in the comparative work in the table and narrative after the table. The differences show the need for integrative health care, it highlights the need not

to be boxed into one mode of health care even when diseases are diagnosed and understood in a mode.

Table 2: Comparing diagnosis in YTM and Western medical paradigms.

S/N	Condition/symptoms	Diagnosis in YTM	Possible Diagnosis in Western Health Care
1	Always felt heat in the stomach and could not get pregnant	*Odù Òsá-Èṣù: Òrìṣà: Ìjà Èsù*- Attack from *Èsù*.	A case of Premature ovarian failure. The heat could be a sign of early menopause with infertility.
2	Skin ulcer	*Odù Òfún-Òdí: Àì gbọ́ ìkìlọ̀* - refusal to heed warning.	A typical skin ulcer. Slow healing as a result of either malnutrition or Diabetes.
3	Could not have erection	*Odù Òdí- Ògúndá: Aya ọ̀run*- spiritual wife.	A case of erectile dysfunction. Caused by emotional stress.
4	Coughing out blood	*Odù Ọ̀sé-Òsá: Ìdúró pé òun ní agbára* - daring others.	A case of lung cancer or Tuberculosis.
5	Audible birdlike noise from the stomach, loss of weight	*Odù Ìrosùn- Ọ̀sé: Ọwọ́ ayé* - attack from witches.	A sign of excessive gas in the stomach and the weight loss can point towards stomach cancer.
6	Paralysis	*Odù Èjì-Ogbè: Àṣedànù nítorí pé kò béèrè* - did not make inquiry.	Possible stroke in the area of the brain controlling the affected body part.
7	Strange actions	*Odù Ògúndá-atóríṣe: Owú-jíjẹ* - jealousy.	Dementia and possibly psychosis.

Patient 1 – In the Western medical paradigm, these symptoms could be representative of a case of Premature ovarian failure. The heat could be a sign of early menopause with infertility. Whereas, in the Yoruba indigenous medical paradigm, the diagnosis from Odù Òsá-Èṣù said that the symptom is caused by Òrìṣà (divinity) and it is Ìjà Èsù- Attack from Èsù.

Patient 2- In Western medical paradigm, the symptoms could be signs of a typical skin ulcer. Probably complicated with slow healing as a result of an underlying condition like malnutrition or Diabetes. But in the Yoruba Traditional medical paradigm, it was diagnosed through Odù Òfún-Òdí that the patient is suffering from Àì gbọ́ ìkìlọ̀ - refusal to heed warning. Preventive efforts could have averted these conditions.

Patient 3 – In the Western healthcare system, this condition could be a case of erectile dysfunction caused by emotional stress or other factors. However, in the practice of Yoruba tradition medicine with diagnosis from Odù Òdí- Ògúndá, the patient was diagnosed to have Aya ọ̀run- spiritual wife.

Patient 4 – Western trained medical doctors concluded that the history of coughing up blood looks like a case of lung cancer or Tuberculosis. This is different from the diagnosis in Yoruba traditional medicine where Odù Ọ̀sé-Òsá diagnosed Ìdúró pé òun ní agbára - daring others.

Patient 5- According to Western trained Doctors, noises from the stomach could be a sign of excessive gas in the stomach and the weight loss can point towards stomach cancer. This is very different from what Yoruba traditional medicine using Odù Ìrosùn- Ọ̀sé, the patient's condition was said to have derived from Ọwọ́ ayé (attack from witches).

Patient 6- This could be a case of a possible stroke in the area of the brain controlling the affected body part. It could also be a cancer with metastases to the spine. However, Odù Èjì-Ogbè: diagnosed Àṣedànù nítorí pé kò béèrè - did not make inquiry, as the cause of the patient's condition.

Patient 7- The disfunctional behaviour was diagnosed to be a case of Dementia and possibly psychosis. This same case was initially diagnosed using Odù Ògúndá-atóríṣe, and the divination process revealed Owú-jíjẹ - jealousy as the reason for the condition.

6 Discussion

This study demonstrates how single condition can be better understood through integrative health care; thereby highlighting unity in multiple health care paradigms and creates a good ground for collaboration and reconfiguring African Studies. Particularly as Khalikova (2023) noted that "scholars have experimented with other analytical conceptualisations such as eclecticism and hybridity (Brooks, Cerulli & Sheldon 2020) to highlight how seemingly distinct medical traditions can be practiced in eclectic and entangled ways, where every doctor-patient encounter entails a negotiation of diverse medical ideas and treatments."

The categories of disease causation found in Yoruba health care system have been highlighted by Foster and Anderson (1978) and Odejide (1978), to include the natural, which are physical ailments traceable to known causes; supernatural, ailments traceable to spiritual attacks; mystical, ailments with recognizable symptoms, but do not respond to known treatments; and Oke (1982) and Jegede, A. S. (1996) added hereditary to the list of disease aetiologies. These four disease aetiologies manifest themselves broadly in natural (explicable) and supernatural (inexplicable) disease (Akin-Otiko 2018). The supernatural diseases have culturally known but not explicable disease aetiologies.

Although scholars (Osunwole 1989; Jegede, A.S. 1996) have interpreted the distinction between traditional and western medicine as dychotomies, they are better seen as complementary. Western medicine lays emphasis on germ theory of disease, which is complemented in Yoruba indigenous medicine which stresses culturally known disease aetiologies and treatments. It is in spite of possible significant differences in health care modes that Khalikova (2023) observed that "Medical pluralism thus provided an important framework that broke away from a reductionist dichotomy of biomedicine versus ethnomedicine, or the West versus the rest." This pluralism has been observed to "provided better health services to Africans. It has continued to receive increasing acceptance in Nigeria and among many other African nations despite the ground breaking improvements recorded in the field of orthodox medicine" (Osawu 2021: 161).

The difference in the modes of diagnosis is possible in the scheme of things among the Yoruba indigenous health care providers because the prescriptions of Ifá divination sometimes "indicate the necessity of sacrificing to a neglected ancestor or a deity. It may suggest that the client should become an adherent of some cult other than the family deity. It may point to disturbed relationships within the family, and the need to restore good feelings between relatives" (Maclean 1971: 33).

The need for integrative form of medicine as it is understood in contemporary times requires that the categories of indigenous medicine should be accepted and not excluded from the Western understanding. There is a complementarity that takes place. Patients should be free to engage the prescriptions of indigenous medicine for holistic purposes. The idea of exclusion comes in when a particular method is at a loss as to what the other mode can do in disease contexts. Here, integrative medicine will be difficult based on a lack of knowledge from either the Western or Yoruba health care system. Some treatments in YTM are uncommon and non-existent in Western practice, and this should create the need for complementarity. In the "African context healing is the restoration of the whole person physically, socially, spiritually mentally and psychologically. Hence the traditional medicine practitioners treat not only the physical illness of a patient but also the spiritual to bring about total healing" (Osawu 2021: 168). To achieve this holistic health, divinities are sometimes consulted; "In the worldview of the Yoruba, Èsù (a divinity) is believed to be one of the major Òrìṣà (divinities) such as Òrìṣà-nlá, ọ̀rúnmìlà, Ògún, Ṣàngó and Ṣòpànná that exist among the over two hundred divinities" (Akin-Otiko 2013: 94).

These Òrìṣà are believed to "serve the will of Olódùmarè in the creation and theocratic government of the world" (Idowu 1996: 54). Olódùmarè is not regarded to be one among them; "He is wholly other than they. But they are under His constant vigilance and control and to Him they owe absolute loyalty" (Idowu 1996: 59). These Òrìṣà are known to perform key functions in the healthcare system of the Yoruba.

Although the Yoruba belief in the existence of dual forces in nature defines interpretations of disease aetiology and treatment, this does not exclude the contemporary view of integrative health care. A good understanding of 'thinking' in dual categories should enhance 'acting' (response) in relational modes. Although diseases in Western medicine are mainly caused by explainable causes making treatment explainable, whereas, in Yoruba indigenous health care, there are explainable and unexplainable causes and treatment of diseases. The thinking pattern in these two health care approaches define actions (treatments) that are provided. This study highlights the need to integrate the thinking (diagnosis) and actions (treatment and prescription) in Western health care into the Yoruba indigenous health care with particular focus on somatoform disorder. Given the possible existence of diseases caused by aetiologies that are cultural in their understanding and explanation, *Ifá* divination becomes a possible contribution to the process of diagnosis and treatment of patients suffering from *àmódi* (Akin-Otiko 2013). The undeniable need for integrative health care must highlight the fact that Yoruba health care system can diagnose as well as prescribe cured for tough diseases. Results showed the link between thinking and acting in the area of health care, thereby making a case for integrative forms of acting/health care. This calls for openness to multiple but related ideas in the process of reconfiguring African Studies.

7 Conclusion

Although the Yoruba belief in the existence of dual forces in nature defines interpretations of disease aetiology and treatment, this does not exclude the contemporary view of integrative health care. A good understanding of 'thinking' in dual categories should enhance 'acting' (response) in relational modes. Although diseases in Western medicine are mainly caused by explainable causes making treatment explainable, whereas, in Yoruba indigenous health care, there are explainable and unexplainable causes and treatment of diseases. The thinking pattern in these two health care approaches define actions (treatments) that are provided. This study highlights the need to integrate the thinking (diagnosis) and actions (treatment and prescription) in Western health care into the Yoruba indigenous health care with particular focus on somatoform disorder. Given the possible existence of diseases caused by aetiologies that are cultural in their understanding and explanation, *Ifá* divination becomes a possible contribution to the process of diagnosis and treatment of patients suffering from *àmódi* (Akin-Otiko 2013). The undeniable need for integrative health care must highlight the fact that Yoruba health care system can diagnose as well as prescribe cured for tough diseases. Results showed the link between thinking and acting in the area of health care, thereby making a case for integrative forms of acting/health care. This calls for openness to multiple but related ideas in the process of reconfiguring African Studies.

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Ways of Knowing Africa: African Literature and Shifting Imaginaries

Peter Simatei

Abstract

Starting from the position posited by the Africa Multiple, that Africa is, and always has been, constituted through its ever-changing relations and is globally entangled and in flux, this article broaches the subject of the role that African literature has played and continues to play in the reconstitution of ways of knowing Africa and in the production of new conceptions of African subjectivities, African ways of life and modes of relations. I proceed from the understanding that literature's engagement in world-making involves the construction of fictional spaces that either contest the existing ones or are relational to them. The article also explores how African literature contests and transforms current relations of power—whether these relations are subsumed under such categories as gender, religion, ethnicity, nation, class, or race—to call alternative temporalities into being. It concludes by focusing on African diasporic writings and their production of political and cultural realities that contest and transform relations based on national rootedness and territorial logic as it visualizes diasporic imaginaries and new poetics of relation.

Keywords: Ways of knowing Africa, Knowledge production, Modes of relations, Fictional spaces, African literature

The first part of my title, "Ways of Knowing Africa," is an obvious intertextual gesture toward the politics of knowledge production in relation to Africa. These questions have been addressed and continue to be addressed in many scholarly debates. The critical questions continue to revolve around Africa as an object of knowledge. Perhaps more important is the question of Africa's

relationship to that very project of knowing. These projects have produced an array of conceptual grammars subsumed under terms such as "Ways of seeing Africa," "Thinking Africa differently," "Africa Knows" and, of course, "Reconfiguring African studies" and many others that attempt to shape the field of African studies and in doing so contest the colonial and hegemonic imposition of particular ways of seeing Africa. My interest here is to reflect in a general way on the role that African literature has played and continues to play in the reconstitution of ways of knowing Africa and in the production of new conceptions of African subjectivities, African ways of life, and modes of relations. African literature encompasses complex and diverse literary texts, traditions, cultures, and languages. However, I will offer a general assessment of the subject at the risk of simplifying the complex relationships that produce African literature as an object of study that encapsulates specific knowledge about Africa. When I talk about African literature here, though, I am referring to recent written literature, which Simon Gikandi describes as "modern African literature (…) produced in the crucible of colonialism" (Gikandi 2000: 379). I will not, however, dwell on the numerous debates that go all the way back to the important Makerere Conference of 1962, officially called "the Conference of African Writers of English Expression", about the nature, function and relevance of African literature.

African literature's prominent intervention in the debates about the invention of Africa or ways of knowing Africa is defined by its confrontation with colonial and Eurocentric perspectives that would later dominate Western scholarship and which established the idea of Africa as a 'dark continent' in need of European intervention and civilization. Chinua Achebe, for example, has been at the forefront of this intervention in his creative enterprise. If Achebe's fiction was central in defining future directions in the development of the African novel[45], even has it recast the Western canon in a new light, his critical essays, particularly those collected in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (Heinmann 1974*)* and *Hopes and Impediments* (Heinemann 1988) directed the focus on the complicity of European literature and scholarship in the promotion of beliefs and assumptions that constructed Africa as less civilized and hence in need of Western paternalist assistance. Often based on this Eurocentric perspective, Western scholarship on Africa constructed the latter as a place of ignorance, barbarism, and primitivism.

Harry Garuba's reflection on the role of the African writer and the artist in the reconstitution of contemporary Africa is a good beginning in understanding the shifting imaginaries about Africa and its place in the world. Questions concerning the role of writers and artists in society were quite relevant in the decolonization period, where writers vested upon themselves or were bestowed by society the role of guiding their people to be proper 'subjects' of their cultures and histories. Garuba asserts:

> For most postcolonial literatures or literatures from emergent literary spaces, literary value inheres as much in the teachability of the text as it does in whatever other aesthetic qualities it may possess; that is, the text's ability to illustrate, rework, or represent some theme or issue considered to be of major significance and to open it up for teaching—about empire, nation, and identity, or post nation, diaspora, and

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[45] For my discussion of Achebe's role in evolving new ways of seeing Africa, see Simatei 2006: 228-238.

globalization, for instance—is as much a source of value as any of its other formal qualities. (Garuba 2017: 10)

Garuba then argues for what he (2017: 19) calls the teacherly texts, texts that "enact the struggle over different articulations of the structure of social relations, or different narratives of the forms of subjectivity, gender relations, sexuality, social order et, etc." Garuba's arguments here partly define African literature's cognitive projects and the knowledge about human relations that one can unlock from the texts through attention to their aesthetics. Unlike in the informative discourses and practices, where knowledge is propositional, the knowledge that literature affords or the truths and the insights about the human condition to which it leads us come in forms that question our normative practices and provide new categories for apprehending the world.

In addressing emerging African realities, at least in its written form, African literature has undergone different but interrelated phases with shifts in thematic engagements, reconstitutions of new spatial-temporal configurations, and stylistic innovations. The starting point for mapping these different phases is limited in the context of my article on colonialism. I am aware of the criticism of this kind of periodization that frames Africa's longer pre-colonial existence in terms of the linearities of imperial history. In fact, oral and written African literature existed outside what we now call modern African literature, which is a recent phenomenon. Scholars like Simon Gikandi and others have documented this well[46]. But as Swati Parashar and Michael Schulz (2021: 868) assert, "to study Africa without invoking the colonial-era legacies remains one of the major epistemological challenges." Colonial history in Africa is, to echo Gurminder Bhambra's reading of Edward Said in a different context, "the product of the West in its actions upon others" (2014: 116) and which, conceived this way, silences articulation of alternative histories, or as Bhambra puts it, removes "the very question of the 'other' in History." Bethwell A. Ogot, the pioneer Kenyan historian who was among the founder historians and editor of the UNESCO project, 'General History of Africa' (GHA), similarly argues:

> African history was for the most part seen as the history of Europeans in Africa - a part of the historical progress and development of Western Europe and an appendix of the national history of the metropolis. It was argued at the time that Africa had no history because history begins with writing and, thus with the arrival of the Europeans. (1992: 71)

Ogot demonstrates how Western scholarship linked African historiography with the "colonial period and its own official historiography, with prejudices, acquired and disseminated as historical knowledge, and with Eurocentric assumptions and arrogant certainty." (ibid.: 71). Just like in the literary projects that challenged the Western construction of Africa as "one long night of savagery," (Achebe 1974: 59) the challenge to imperial historiographical hegemony was part of the decolonization process. The 'General History of Africa' project was, according to Casper Andersen (2022: 49), a "scholarly undertaking but was at the same time regarded as a frame for the enactment of national and transnational memory political agendas that shifted during the project spanned." In a sense, ideological factors underpinning the politics of national liberation and nation building greatly determined the directions of disciplines such as history and literature.

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[46] See for example Gikandi 2000.

Modern African literature, for example, has a complex relationship with colonialism, which is well illustrated by Simon Gikandi, who attributes the rise of literary scholarship in Africa and its current identity or function to "the traumatic encounter between Africa and Europe." Arguing that modern African literature was produced in the crucible of colonialism, Gikandi (2000: 379) asserts, "(N)ot only were the founders of modern African literature colonial subjects, but colonialism was also to be the most important and enduring theme in their works."

Modern African literature's distinctiveness, specificity, and identity are partly marked by its paradoxical relationship to imperial history. Paradoxical in the sense that this literature is not only about the history of imperialist subjugation of African peoples and their resistance to it; it is also its product. Yet it is also more than all this in the sense that while it has articulately projected the complex interplay of the forces shaping the destiny of the African people, this literature actively intervenes in making that history or, as Ammaria Lanasri (2001: 58) would put it in the context of Algeria, such literature is "compelled to bear the evidence of historical processes […] and regarded as a contribution to national resistance, political freedom and cultural identity." Hence, one historical function it has served and continues to serve is mapping out a unique politico-cultural consciousness as part of a larger project of liberating the African person from the debilitating conditions created by colonialism.

Ogot quoted before envisions the task of decolonization for the nascent African historiography, and the same can be said of the project of modern African literature. Here, decolonization as a literary and historiographic project occurs simultaneously as the freeing of modes of representation from European traditions and the reconstitution of decolonial spaces that disrupt hegemonic power structures and ideologies. African literature is often seen as working to counter the colonial distortion of African identities and to recover lost histories, traditions, and cultural codes erased or suppressed by the colonial experience. In a sense, this was a quest for relevance, an effort to reclaim agency. In such context, the writers' relevance to society is attained through a conscious intervention in the unfolding of history, an intervention which, as a kind of artistic mission, is already over-determined by the inhuman politics of both colonial and postcolonial epochs. The African writer testifies Nuruddin Farah "is engaged in the unfolding of history in its rawness, engaged in the making of history" (quoted in Ewen 1984: 193).

The writer's participation in the making of history begins with the construction of what Edward Said calls "a new mythos" that seems at first to suggest "a return to an African Africa" (Said 1994: 211). Said cites as an example Ngũgĩ's first novel, *The River Between*. One may include works such as Okot p'Bitek's *Song of Lawino*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Camara Laye's *The African Child*, Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, Grace Ogot's *Land Without Thunder* etc. Such works participate in "the charting of cultural territory" (Said 1994: 209) through "validation of the African culture denied by colonial historiography" (Gikandi 1996: 7). To paraphrase Said, the role of this literature has included that of reinstating native idioms, reimagining and refiguring local histories, geographies, and communities (Said: 1993). Close to this position is Graham Huggan's understanding of African literature as playing a "recuperative" as well as a "deconstructive" role. He argues:

> Like other postcolonial literatures, African literature might be seen in very general terms as having both a recuperative and a deconstructive dimension: recuperative insofar as it conscripts the literary text into the service of a continually refashioned cultural identity; deconstructive insofar as it plays on and challenges Western

readerly expectation, and in so doing works toward dismantling self-privileging Western modes of vision and thought. (Huggan 2008: 40)

At least, this was the agenda of the African pioneer writers writing up to the early 1980s. In their critical essays, they affirm that this was their mission and that their relevance to society lies in their conscious intervention in the unfolding of history. What comes to mind quickly is the famous and often quoted assertion by Chinua Achebe on the role of the African writer in the period of decolonization, where he sees the role of the writer as that of re-education and regeneration that must be done after colonialism. This is the role that he expected his novels to play and especially those of his novels that are set in the past:

I will be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them. (Achebe 1974: 59)

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's position on this is well-known and well-studied, and I do not need to rehearse his politics of decolonization. Still, it is worth noting that, like other writers, Ngũgĩ envisaged African literary texts as embodying "a structure of values dialectically opposed to those of the ruling class of the oppressing race and nation" (Ngũgĩ 1972: 27). This may sound simplistically Manichean. Still, in writing against colonial culture and world, the African writer in this epoch sought to organize a whole new reality whose mode of relation to the colonial one would be defined not only in terms of its emancipatory potential but also in the foregrounding of the African as the center of this world. This does not imply that African literature functions in such a simplistic manner by merely inverting and negating colonialist values. It is to admit instead that African literature emerges through resistance to conditions that deny possibilities of its existence to establish in the process what Homi Bhabha would call "spaces of subaltern signification" where totalization is resisted, and "the calculation of power is disturbed" (Bhabha 1990: 312).

Decolonization in that early postcolonial period was a cultural and political project of African literature. The concern of African texts was/is not only to decolonize the cultures and histories of the African peoples or, to put it differently, using a tired phrase; it is not only that they "write back to the empire" in the contestation of European misrepresentations of the continent; it also seeks to reveal the subtle and indigenized forms which oppressive power has taken in the post-colonial/post-national era. Hence, questions of how colonial power relations endure through the post-colonial state and how it continues to shape the everyday life of the people as it subjugates them to its hegemonic interests constitute the central concerns of many African writings.

This reading of the postcolonial state as a reconfiguration of colonial power sets the stage for African literature's de-legitimation of the nationalist project and, with it, the freeing of literary imagination from the burdens of homogeneity, autochthony, authenticity, and essentialisms that defined the nation-building projects in the first place. But this opens new debates even as one moves away from prescriptive agendas for African literature. What kind of Africa do we glimpse from the emerging works of literature? Or, to put it differently, what kind of stories are coming out of Africa in the twenty-first century? These questions have been the subject of intense scholarly debates as writers and literary scholars grapple with the nature of the new African writings. The consensus seems to be that the periodization we seek to delineate the new from the

old is impossible and perhaps not even necessary, for it simplifies the spatio-temporal complexity that defines these writings. For example, in his critique of the concept of "Third generation Nigerian literature" and the kind of periodization that yields this classification, Hamish Dalley (2013: 15) argues that it is a "reliance on spatio-temporal constructs that fail to account for the complexity of the texts it classifies." Using two recent Nigerian novels—Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) and Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011)—to illustrate his point, Dalley reads in these novels "models of time and space that complicate their insertion into critical narratives predicated on concepts like "generation" and "nation" (Falley 2023: 16). Like Dalley, Lindsey Green-Simms (2013: 4), points to the complexity of twenty-first African writing arguing that it "is by no means monolithic and is certainly still informed both by the stories of previous generations and by the tragic topics of war, hunger, and violence" but also defined by "factors such as globalization, uneven development, and urbanization."

Writers who frequently top the list of so-called third-generation African writers include Chimamanda Adichie, Teju Cole, Dinaw Mengestu, NoViolet Bulawayo, Helon Habila, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Binyavanga Wainaina, Aminatta Forna, Taiye Selasi, and Nadifa Mohamed. In a sense, one notes in their writings a disavowal of the politics of decolonization and identity formations within the confines of national spaces as they seek to address emerging identities in the transnational and cosmopolitan locations and diasporic spaces from where they write. Writings from these locations give rise to texts that affirm the multiple, hybrid, and fluid identities of Africans in the metropolitan capitals of the West but who, nevertheless, remain subjects of global power structures even as they celebrate their newfound sense of agency and empowerment. Amatoritsero Ede (2018: 38) has argued that the works of these writers—he refers to them as "third generation African diaspora"—"focalise characters who are socially empowered, confident, upwardly mobile, and relatively in control of their destinies." He (2018: 36) argues that it is through professional excellence that this diaspora can "subvert metropolitan hierarchies of subjugation and powerlessness." Ede's reflection is in the context of Afropolitanism and is partly a celebration of the same, especially the kind well popularized by Taiye Selasi (2005) and which, one may argue, is structured by a grammar of disengagement with Africa. Afropolitanism has been heavily challenged for its elitist posture, consumerist orientation, and apolitical disposition (see among others: Gikandi 2011; Bwesigye 2013; Debra 2016; Gerhmann 2016; Musila 2016; Harris 2019).

While the task of the first-generation and even second-generation African writers was to reclaim community from within the boundaries defined by colonialism, contemporary writing, written as it were from transnational locations, grapples with realities generated by fluid, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting spaces. The "nation-centeredness"—to use Timothy Brennen's phrase—of the first-generation writers ceases to work as a framework for representing complex intertwined global hegemonic realities that transcend the nation. However, an absolute disengagement with the nation is perhaps impossible, given that it continues to be a constitutive space in forming a diasporic or even a cosmopolitan consciousness. In other words, despite its tendency towards monolithic, exclusionary, and hegemonic politics, the nation is reconstituted by a diasporic logic as a multivalent space within which contending narratives and identities can be enacted.

Some scholars have argued that the eschewal of nationalist politics and espousal of a post-nationalist ethic liberates the African writer from the burden of embodying the story and the

politics of the nation. Of course, this is not a new concern. It recalls the debate that followed Jameson's sweeping categorization of "Third World literatures" as mere national allegories which in a sense is a totalizing view that sort to, in the words of John Hawley, "imposes a theoretical template to [...] quite divergent writings, falsely rendering it all quite accessible and familiar." (Hawley xv:1996). In analytical terms, Jameson's totalization glosses over the complex functions of this literature. The critical theoretical issue here is that African literature in its different phases of development, which as I have pointed out, are interrelated, do not present unmediated access to African realities; it instead participates in their constitution and problematization of Africa's understanding of its multiple self through what Graham Huggan (2008: 111) has called "structured interplay between modified local and imported aesthetic traditions; their cultivated ambiguities; their subtle modulations of voice and perspective in the multifaceted portrayal of the various cultural environments they represent." African literature, diasporic or otherwise, envisages diverse and heterogeneous social formations within the nation-space and amplifies such formations as structures within which emancipatory politics can be organized.

As I conclude, let me briefly discuss a new kind of writing that sometimes falls under the broad rubric of Indian Ocean imaginaries but is often categorized as Asian-African literature in Eastern and Southern African scholarship. This is the writing produced by the third and fourth generation of the Indian diaspora in East Africa and is therefore usually designated as a form of diasporic writing, just as is the case with the third generation of African writers writing from outside the continent. I am treating the East African Asian diaspora as an African diaspora in the sense that in its narratives—often conceived in North America and Britain, where most of the writers migrated to—it defines itself as such. And yet, by defining this diaspora as African, I am not 'territorializing' it in any way. The stories that tell its experience are complex ones that exhibit multiple linkages of three continents; the Indian sub-continent, Africa, and Europe/North America, so that its narratives are no longer concerned with the tracing of stable roots and histories of origin but with tracking the non-linear routes that map instead what Paul Gilroy (1993: 276) would call "fragile communicative relationships across time and space that are the basis not of diaspora identities but of diaspora identifications."

It is in this sense that the East African Asian diaspora can be seen as being both African as well as Indian. It is for similar reasons that I read the literatures of this diaspora as interlaces of shifting diasporic narratives or, to borrow from Carole Boyce Davies (1994: 4) on black women writing, as "a series of boundary crossings rather than a fixed, geographical, ethnically and nationally bound category of writing." Read this way the tale of East African Asian diaspora redefines the historical experience and identities in East Africa away from the nationalist discourses that sought to reconstitute the post-colonial nation and identities in monolithic terms. This perspective enables the Asian subject in East Africa to claim their East African identity by negotiating the otherwise exclusionary structures of the post-colonial nation. This category of literature envisages the diasporic subject as a gathering of differential moments characterized by a multi-positionality that transgresses the purity of boundaries and locations constructed in national discourses. This affirmation of multiple, split and fluid identities in diasporic re-imaginations enables the East African Asian migrants in Europe and North America to visualize themselves as belonging to both East Africa and 'elsewhere' or 'here' and 'there' and in-between the two spaces simultaneously.

Like in the new African writing discussed above, the East African Asian writings contest and transform relations based on national rootedness and territorial logic. Their fictional works affirm the multiple histories to which they are heir. The transnational nature of their present realities becomes fictionalized in their texts, an engagement that maps diasporic politics as a critical feature of their writing. Also amplified in their writings are the pet concerns of diaspora discourses, that include the politics of home and belonging in displacement, the ambivalence of the postcolonial situation, the polyvalent nature of cultural identities and histories within the postcolony, and the coexistence of a multiplicity of cultural cartographies associated with it.

For this kind of literature, the constitution of alternative imaginaries involves not only the translation of national spaces that are recast by nationalist narratives as, to borrow from Mavroudi (2007: 270), "stable, culturally homogeneous, historically unchanging; it also means writing a de-territorialized diaspora, one that does not return, unbounded category of people not connected with a specific homeland. What is imagined here are individual identities that are malleable hybrid and multiple." In other words, this literature counters two kinds of essentialisms: one that is constructed within the nation-state and the colonial state (where the national people and territory are understood in homogeneous and exclusionary terms); the other essentialism comes with concepts of diaspora that reify notions of belonging and the "roots" of migrants in places of origin (Sökefeld 2006: 265).

Thus, the diasporic perspective adopted by East African Asian writings reworlds the East African nation-state by problematizing the relationship between decentered and hybrid memories of the diasporic subject, and the supposedly stable and homogenous memory formations constituted within the nation-state. In this case, diaspora and diasporic identities work within, against, and/or around national identities to construct plural spaces for enacting the difference of the diasporic subject. This is well demonstrated, for example, in one of Moyez Vassanji's novels, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, where Vassanji revisits Indians' ambivalent relationships with Kenya's national history. Unlike in his early novels such as *The Gunny Sack* and *The Book of Secrets*—where the concern is the impossibility of belonging to, and the inevitability of departure from East Africa—this later novel demonstrates the Asians' complex entanglement with Kenya's equally contested histories.

It is in locating East African Indian writing within the historical circumstances of its production that we begin to understand how this diaspora constitutes a space that is, to borrow from Jones and Roberts (1997: xxvii), "contextually embedded in other spaces by virtue of constitutive relations they share with other places, things, practices, and persons." In other words, a diasporic space is an intersectional space. This space is, to appropriate Anthias term, "translocational," a term she uses to describe:

> … the ways in which social locations are products of particular constellations of social relations, and in terms of relationality and experience at determinate points in time … It points to the existence of contradictory and shifting social locations where one might be in a position of dominance and subordination simultaneously on the one hand or at different times or spaces on the other (Anthias 2008: 107).

In a sense, the diasporic subject is caught within intersecting social and even national boundaries. If anything, the diasporic subject is defined by the multiplicity of locations and identities and is

heir the convergence of pluralistic spaces and temporalities. The protagonists in this literature are often migrants in Europe or North America who, confronted with generalized racism against Asians, strategically perform their East African identities as a mark of difference. Yet this relating to East Africa is problematic to the extent that East Africa emerges contradictorily both as home and as the site of expulsion and pain, promising no clear affiliation to the subject. The subject's longing for East Africa (as home) is defined by what Gikandi in his reading of Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands* describes as "anxieties that emerge when nostalgia accompanies trauma but also impelled by the desire for recovery and commemoration." (Gikandi 1996: 201)

As can be seen in the writings of Vassanji, it is the recognition of this contradiction that enables a demystification of diaspora's theoretically produced hyperreality, a demystification that leads to the historicization of diaspora "as a condition of pain and double alienation" rather than its glorification "as a mode of perennial liminality" (Radhakrishnan 1996: 74). Fiction tends almost always to confront the often-bleak material conditions of diasporans/migrants and the histories that have led to them, a contrast to idealistic cosmopolitan abstractions one sees in Afropolitanism that threatens, through decontextualization, to evacuate diasporic subjects from historical specificities.

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Consentient Citizenship and the Making of Infrastructural Frontiers in East Africa

Paddy Kinyera and Martin Doevenspeck

Abstract

Within the context of an Africa said to be rising, infrastructures remain the key diagnosis of development challenges across different parts of the continent. Remedial prescriptions have come in different forms, from different angles: increase in national government's infrastructure spending; tailored-loans from development finance institutions such as the World Bank, African Development Bank; and international infrastructure-cooperation drives such as China-led Belt and Road Initiative. Over the past decade and counting, East Africa has witnessed a significant rise in infrastructure programs that have become structural apparatus for instauration of new state-society relations. The underlying vision in the high-way schemes, the Standard Gauge Railways, the oil pipelines, resort cities, hydro-power programs, among others, is the transformation of the region's economy, with a potentially positive trickle-down effect on the wellbeing of the population. The making of this wellbeing is pegged to the assumption that mobilities along and within these infrastructures have the potential to create productive interconnections between the population and forces of change located in the distant far. Drawing on the development of a crude oil pipeline project in Uganda and a multimodal transport corridor in Kenya, this chapter examines how these two projects shape citizenship and subaltern idealization of socioeconomic transformation. Developed within a proposed conceptual frame of "consentient citizenship" the chapter is an empirical exploration of emergent multidimensional modes of relations between socio-material realties of the local communities and the establishment of corridors for mega mobility infrastructures.

Keywords: East Africa, EACOP, LAPSSET, infrastructure, frontier.

1 Citizenship and Infrastructures

Citizenship debates emerged in the second half of the 20th century as part of discourses of rights and class struggles, highlighting the dynamics of structural relations of the 'capitalist society' (Turner 1990; see also Mann, 1987). Through the decade leading up to the start of the 21st century, citizenship increasingly became a mainstay of institutional politics and discourse of participatory governance, in which it serves as the foundation for solidarity in making resource claims within a given nation-state (see Turner 1997; Donati 1995). Contemporary debates about citizenship, although maintaining the concept's foundational pillars, have seen the rise of different perspectives intersect with a broad range of emerging sociocultural, politico-economic and environmental realities of our time (see Carter 2021; Watt 2018; Schattle 2009). The term citizenship has more often been used as the rightmost endocentric element of morphological formulations such as corporate citizenship, participatory citizenship, global citizenship, infrastructural citizenship, among many others.[47]

Farhana Sultana (2020: 3) has recently argued that citizenship is not a status, but a terrain of continual contests "fraught with difficulties and tensions". She suggests that the concept is better understood in relation to claims of belonging that (r)evolve around/through unfixed daily experiences. Although in this particular work Sultana is more concerned with the intersectionality between infrastructures and gender in the urban setting, her framing of citizenship is important to infrastructure studies. This chapter builds on this understanding of infrastructure-citizenship intersections. Not only are infrastructures socio-technological apparatuses of governmentality that patterns forms of relations in space and time (Larkin 2013), they are ontologically and epistemologically significant objects that mediate different forms of human interactions (Niewöhner 2015). In rural contexts, infrastructures are often packaged with inventive imaginations of a world of hope and futurity towards which social groups become oriented—what Michael Truscello (2020) framed as "[pavers] of modern life". That infrastructures appeal differently to a wide range of stakeholders, their creation tends to invoke certain illusions about the future. These illusions lay the foundations for particular types of socio-material interactions; claims and counterclaims; promises, hopes and fears that eventually shape the character of these infrastructure.

In many parts of Africa, infrastructures remain the single most important indicator of the envisioned "rise" of the continent (see Calderón, Cantú, and Chuhan-Pole 2018). In light of this prospect of becoming better, continental initiatives to push for prioritization of investments in what has been described as "impactful infrastructures" (World Bank 2021), have proliferated over the past decade. The push to develop the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) between Uganda and Kenya and transboundary transport corridors such as Kenya's Lamu-Port South-Sudan-Ethiopia (LAPSSET) project are good examples. In this regard, the endorsement of the Programme for Africa's Infrastructure Development (PIDA) by the African Union in 2012[48] marked the onset of what can be said to be the continent's "infrastructure turn", at the heart of which lies the drive

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[47] See Andriof and Mcintosh 2001; Ananya 2009; Lemanski 2020; Carter 2021.

[48] OECD/ACET, 'Quality Infrastructure in 21st Century Africa: Prioritising, Accelerating and Scaling up in the Context of PIDA (2021-2030)', 2020.

towards a more mediated intra-African economic cooperation, integration and trade (see Olney 2020).

Broadly speaking, there is a considerable degree of consent among development policy experts that the future of Africa and its population lies in the quantity and quality of infrastructures, implicitly echoing Paul Edward's idea that "modern citizens live by means of infrastructures" (cited in Aalders 2021: 1001). However, a recent study published by McKinsey & Company indicates that there is a remarkable paradox surrounding the development of infrastructures that have hampered the implementation of various projects (see Lakmeeharan et al 2020). Their analyses show that although there exists a great deal of transnational investment interest in Africa's infrastructure projects, only 10% of the projects take effect and reach a successful closure, with 90% drop-off rate immediately after feasibility studies have been done. That is, at the point where the developers seek to gain approval for the projects through multiple forms of stakeholder engagement.

We perceive stakeholder engagements in the context of infrastructure projects to be processes of frontier-making that entails building relations among different actors, often bringing citizens, the state, and corporations into particular modes of relations. Thought so, the epistemological demand is to pay attention to ways in which stakeholders engage, conventionally or otherwise, to reach a consensus on where, when, why and how infrastructures are developed. The communities, who are differently entangled in the infrastructure-making process, are important, not just for their being within the reach of particular projects, but also being actors from whose perspectives such projects bring about different interpretations, challenges and subaltern socio-material configurations. Framed this way, academic and policy debates about infrastructures should attempt to make sense, not just of how infrastructures mediate societal relations, but also how these relations are brought about in concrete ontological terms, particularly before the infrastructures are themselves put in place.

In expanding the debate about infrastructures as fixed and mobile entities for relations, the concept of "infrastructural citizenship" (Lemanski 2022) has recently emerged as a tool to explain the ways in which mega projects intersect with citizenship. Infrastructural citizenship reflects the socio-material binaries that are produced by modes of relational practices around built environments (Lemanski 2022). Whereas these binaries are often real in urban settings where infrastructures exist, they are often imagined in the rural areas where infrastructure-makings are crafted in ways that link particular social groups to certain ways of thinking and acting.

In relation to this chapter, Kenya's Lamu-Port-South-Sudan Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor project, for example, is a "modernist-impulse" (see Chome 2020) for future-making, designed to change internal socio-economic and political interactions within the country, as well as its interaction with the rest of the world through, for instance, the Lamu port. Viewed this way, the project is a symbolic socio-political and geo-economic imagination framed within an ambitious national vision, charted as a multi-modal path towards making the presence of Kenya(ns) felt from the centre, through objects of modernity, to the marginalized drylands (see Mkutu, Müller-Koné and Otieno Owino 2021). There is evidence in infrastructure research that at different levels, the materialization of mega projects tend to be met with unique and (but sometimes) predictable challenges in space and time. This points to significant empirical and

conceptual opportunities for research in an attempt to make sense of mega infrastructure projects beyond the mantra of transformation that they are often embellished with.

From an empirical angle, we examine the process of developing a common understanding between stakeholders, in the interactive processes of materializing mega infrastructures. Taking Uganda's East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) and Kenya's transboundary LAPSSET corridor as examples, we pose two empirical questions: what forms of relations emerge in the process of making infrastructures in real time and space? How can these forms of infrastructural-relations improve our understanding of citizenship? These empirical questions demand a complex triangulation of different conceptual and epistemological strands.

From the conceptual angle, we pursue these questions in two ways: first, we view infrastructures as ways of moving development boundaries to relatively remote areas, conceived of here as frontier lands. We propose the *notion infrastructural frontier*, by which we imply, on the one hand, the deliberate institutional agenda of the state to reach frontier-areas by way of targeted infrastructure projects. In this regard, we explore the ways in which the expansive technologies of state power navigate contentions that arise in the endeavour to materialize such mega projects. On the other hand, infrastructural frontier also illustrates a sort of property-rush: the move by the rich elite in the urban areas, who under no compelling crises, decide to establish themselves in the rural areas, in anticipation of material gains out of infrastructure projects. As a result, property contentions emerge, which invoke the notion of citizenship, and the right to own property by both the mobile elite, and the original occupants of the frontier lands. This is the most problematic mode of relation brought about by infrastructure developments, as it is not only unpredictable, but also ungovernable.

Unlike the speculative elite who strategically extend their influence to the peripheries, the state and corporations are guided by conventional principles advanced by the International Financial Corporations (IFCs) led by the World Bank on the question of free consent prior to development of mega projects.[49] Although often read as a guide for project operations in the context of indigenous peoples, the underlying principles of free prior informed consent (FPIC) generally implores corporations to exercise a sense of responsibility, especially where their operations pose significant socioeconomic, cultural and environmental threats to particular social groups.

In the context of development practice, FPIC emerged as a vibrant field of policy debate, specifically linked to large-scale infrastructures, evolving alongside notions of "democratic community" and indigenous rights.[50] Although this chapter does not delve into elaborate discussions about free prior informed consent, it is important to reflect upon the idea of free consent, particular the question of how free consent can be said to be free. We reflect upon this with a conceptual framing that links the production of consent to exercise of responsible citizenship, particularly in state-citizen relations; and citizenship frictions, in this case, between the speculative elite in the metropole and the rural poor.

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[49] In this regard, see World Bank 2017, particularly Performance Standard (PS)7.

[50] See, for instance: Barelli 2012; Mohanty and Macdermott 2013; Dunlap 2018; among others.

The idea of consentient citizenship is used here to highlight two things: the first is the view that consent is a bio-political category based on free-will. This relates with communities 'freely' agreeing to institutional dispossession made possible by their own rational self-calculations, and the ability to anticipate, and aspire to be part of development agendas framed within specific infrastructure projects. Here, the population depicts relative awareness of the potential gains from infrastructure projects such jobs, business opportunities, and, most importantly, their link with the affluent world.

The second case is one of consent being a manufactured (or invented) category, originating from apparent subaltern resistances to certain infrastructure projects. Although the IFCs—which often fund mega projects—encourage stakeholders to undertake the first case, we will show empirically that the absence of bio-political free-will may not necessarily imply the abandonment of the projects. Consent is, therefore, manufactured. This does not only apply to institutionalized forms of dispossession, but also to socio-material frictions resulting from what can be said to be elite invasion. It is the second of case that we develop further along which line, we draw on the ways in which on the other hand, narratives of transformation, wealth and better life have been packaged for local communities, to help the state and the corporations navigate around critical attitudes and recalcitrant behaviours towards the projects.

On the other hand, we also examine instances of invention and elicitation of risks and fears to influence the behaviour of the citizens, to compel them to heed to the call that they consent to being dispossessed. In short, the chapter explores the ways in which the implementation of the two mega projects brings about the modelling of frontier-behaviours and attitudes towards forces that are said to be intended to incorporate the peripheries into the politico-economic and socio-material configurations of metropolitan modernity.

2 Infrastructural Frontier

The concept of frontier has a long history that cannot be exhaustively rehearsed here. However, the rich archive of the literature points to its links with spatial concepts such as borders, boundaries, zones, among others.[51] Frontier theory originates in the work of Fredrick Jackson Turner, that is said to have had great influence on the attitudes of "Americans towards the role of the West in shaping American values and institutions" (Turner 1920: 48). Turner's original thesis presents the frontier as vacant land that needed to be conquered and effectively occupied. This was later developed further by different scholars. Ladis Kristof, for example, writing in the 1960s, pointed out that the term frontier draws its meaning from the word "front" (Kristof 1959)—alluding to the realms of expansion towards what lies ahead in either in spatial terms, or in terms of the next level in a continuum that has to be achieved. To Kristof, frontier is about integration and transition from one sphere of life to another; an opportunity to manipulate and reconfigure patterns of rudimentarily organised socio-political and cultural entities (Kristof 1959).

With this framing, Kristof re-echoes Turner's *tidal* metaphor, by which frontiers are signified as empty fields of opportunities, which if effectively taken up, represent progress that are capable of expanding the horizons of possibilities. However, the idea of frontiers' emptiness should not be

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[51] See, for example, Hasson 1996; Rasmussen and Lund 2018; Mueller 2021.

read in relation to the other side of it: empty is only so when something else is also filled-up. In this context, it is a relational conception—a kind of imaginative social-spatial juxtaposition between *here* (assumed or known to be filled-up) and *there* (assumed or known to be empty, and is, therefore, expected to be-/come filled-up). Framed this way, the idea that something is 'empty' designs pathways towards it's being filled-up. In the context of his writing, Turner noted that the advancement of American settlement on what was then empty should explain what American development has been all about (see Turner 1893).

In the context of Africa, the foundation of the frontier debate was laid by an anthropologist—Igor Kopytoff (1987). With his notion of the "internal frontier", Kopytoff is concerned about the internal re-organisation of African societies resulting from interstitial crises within a metropole, whereby, distressed social groups break away from the metropole and occupy existing spaces at the margins (see Korf, Hagmann, and Doevenspeck 2013). Whereas to Turner, the empty is imagined to be in the far distant, Kopytoff's frontier represents frictions of socio-material and political organisations from within entities. Whether viewed as a "teleological territorial penetration" (Korf, Hagmann, and Doevenspeck 2013: 34) or as an interstitial expression of disenchantment and the reorganisation of the metropole, different debates about the concept of the frontier generally make reference to forms of mobilities, exchange, exploitation and subjugation.

We attempt to reflect on these ideas by viewing mega infrastructures projects as means through which frontiers (are made to) become mobile, or are absorbed by metropole. There are two dimensions to this. Whereas on the one hand, there is the impending extension of the frontier itself, as forces of the metropole surge in; there is, on the other, the mobilization of elements of the frontier such as resources, farm products, labour, among others. This takes place in what Timothy Raeymaeker's calls a "structural setting" for constant interactions (Raeymaekers 2009). With the two projects in Uganda and Kenya as examples, we view mega infrastructures as structural techno-geometrical spaces in which relations of power attempt to draw elements that presumably lie in the margins of modernity, represented as empty and "not yet" civilized (Korf, Hagmann, and Doevenspeck 2013: 30)—into contact and interactive mediation with forces of hyper-modernity of the metropole.

That said, the terminology of the infrastructural frontier which we deploy here is used to refer to the structuring of development practice in peripheral regions through infrastructures. Not only are infrastructures opening up possibilities for the metropole to get into the peripheral areas, these (peripheral areas) are also getting exposed to mobile modernities of the metropole that are instrumentalized by infrastructures. We are making attempts to see frontiers differently, not necessarily as the empty, but the empty as presumed by the one who seeks to have them filled-up. In this section, we outline the key features of these two projects laying the foundation for empirical discussion of consentient citizenship in the subsequent section.

3 The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) Project

Uganda's EACOP project is a core element of the multi-billion-dollar oil-infrastructure investment project to which the country has committed the future of its hydrocarbon industry. That the project is the only established plausible way in which land-locked Uganda can move its crude oil to the international market, it is only when it is completed that Uganda can fully get into the global

matrix of the oil industry. Thought to be the most realistic commercialisation plan for the country's oil, the processual development of the crude oil pipeline is a demonstrable space of production of different modes and trajectories of relations at different levels.

Part of the relations and the politics surrounding their production started with the decision for Uganda to choose between Kenya and Tanzania, for what would be the path of the infrastructure. Between 2015 and 2016, Kenya was in the cards as the likely transit country for the crude-oil pipeline project. This was not realised due to what some critics framed as "the Magufuli factor" and Tanzania's "politics of doing Kenya" (Pers. com. 11/2018). In 2017, Uganda and Tanzania signed an intergovernmental agreement that determined, not just the final international route, but also the name—the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP). This is to start at Kabaale (formerly, an area made up of 11 remote and hard-to-reach predominantly agrarian villages, now being transformed into an Industrial Park with an international airport) in Hoima, to the north-eastern Tanzanian port of Tanga, covering an approximate distance of 1,445 kilometres (Map 1).

Map 1: Trajectory of the Ugandan Section of the EACOP System

Envisioned to bring this remote part of Uganda and its poor population into contact with various dimensions of the global oil-complex, the pipeline is an infrastructural frontier of fundamental scalar significance. It is a politico-economic, socio-technical and geometric field of expression of multiple dimensions of power relations, and the desire to make things better through oil exploitation: to the government of Uganda, the EACOP is a strategic investment that is anticipated to kick-start an oil-driven boost of the country's revenue base—the vessel not just to move Uganda's natural resource fortunes to the market, but also to move the economy to a vibrant position by achieving lower-middle income status.[52] Within its 30-metre corridor Right-of-Way, the EACOP, the world's longest electrically heated crude oil pipeline system is a geometry of power that is expected to deliver the country to new forms of inter and trans-national cooperation.

As these scales of relations take shape, the development of the EACOP at the local levels is a platform for the configuration of micro-modes of relation within Uganda that draw on different socio-material realities along the 296-kilometre stretch. That the 30-metre Right-of-Way (ROW) of the pipeline infrastructure cuts through over 170 villages, it has brought different communities along its southerly trajectory into direct and indirect contacts with activities surrounding its making, to get oil moving. The EACOP riparian communities between Hoima (the starting point) and Kyotera to end point of the project within Uganda have different socioeconomic orientations, making it difficult to describe them in specific terms. What is clear is that their different sociomaterialities have interacted with the process of making the right-of-way for the project in unique ways.

At an estimated cost of US\$3.5 billion, the crude-oil pipeline is to be developed through a joint-venture partnership arrangement constituted by four actors: French Oil Corporation TOTAL E&P—the lead developer of the project with stake of 62%; two state-owned enterprises (Uganda's National Oil Company (UNOC) and Tanzania's Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC)), each holding 15% stake; and China's China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) with 8% stake. At full scale, the EACOP is expected to evacuate over 200,000 barrels of crude oil per day, which, depending on the stability of prices on the global market, could be a game-changer for Uganda's national economy.

The stake is high for the country, not just with the EACOP, but with the oil industry as a whole. Proscovia Nabbanja, the CEO of Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) argued that for every dollar that Uganda invests, the country is likely to return 10 (see Atuhaire 2022), an impressive economic embroidery that is just too attractive to be true, particularly with an industry as volatile as oil. However, the process of realizing this great national politico-economic incentive, as will be expressed in subsequent sections, entailed the determination and concretization of the pipeline's right-of-way between Hoima and Kyotera. Arguably, this was the most contentious subnational exercise for the government of Uganda and the lead investor—TOTAL to undertake.

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[52] National Resistance Movement, 'Securing Your Future: 2021-2026 Manifesto' (Kampala: National Resistance Movement, n.d.), www.nrm.ug.
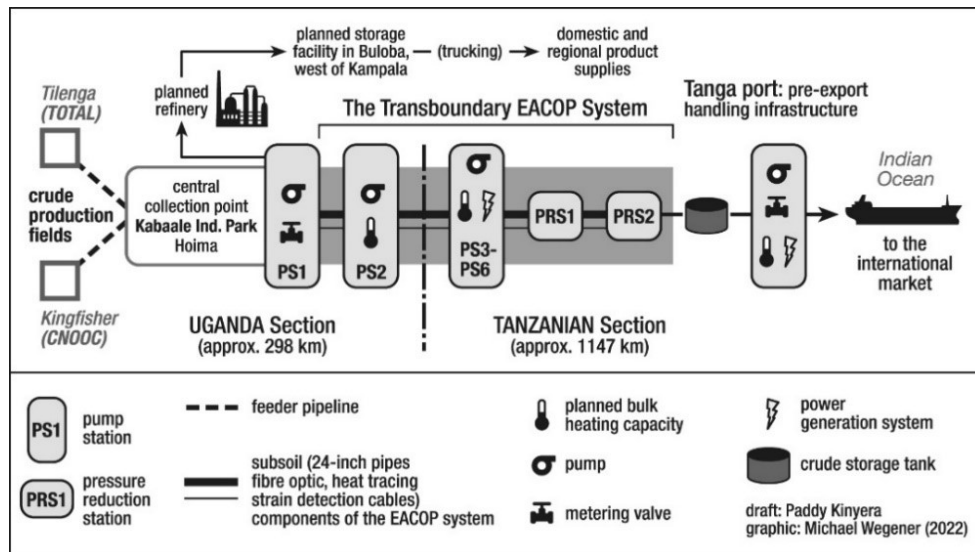
**Figure 1: Illustration of the Transboundary EACOP System**

The system is designed in such a way that many of its components will be subsoil—that is, buried at depth of approximately 2 meters. This, as one of the experts noted, is to guard against exposure to risks of sabotage (Interview, Kampala: December 2019). Apart from the subsoil components, the general oil movement activity starting from the feeder lines, to and through the EACOP will be monitored by several above-ground installations such as pump stations, metering valves, strain detection features and storage facilities (Figure 1). In February 2022, a final investment decision (FID) with a financial commitment in the region of US$ 10 billion was signed by the three partners to develop the transboundary crude-oil pipeline alongside two crude-production fields—the Tilenga (in Buliisa) and Kingfisher (in Buhuka).[53] The FID paved the way for intensification of field operations, including compensation of people in the context of project-related socio-economic disturbances and dispossession (framed as land acquisition) such as displacements along the ROW.

Generally, the process of land acquisition (dispossession, compensation and displacements) draws our attention to two important moments: the first is the subaltern push *for infrastructural-citizenship*, which entailed a demonstrable awareness of benefits of being within reach of the project areas. Such awareness created a space of potential enactment of consent, even when the immediate effects of the projects are expected to be negative, for instance, through loss of property and displacement. The second moment was the institutionalization of a *portfolio of hope* among the citizens to match their aspiration of becoming agential actors in different aspects of the oil industry. Portfolios of hope is demonstrable by, among other things, the enactment of corporate citizenship. For instance, the creation of, as we shall show later on, the so-called "national supplier database" by the Ugandan government as a channel for digitally expressing interest in being agential actors in projects related to the oil industry.

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[53] See Petroleum Authority of Uganda 2022.

4 The Lapsset Corridor Project

The LAPSSET corridor project has been an attractive field of empirical research in recent years (see Enns 2017). Developed as a flagship project of Kenya's national Vision 2030, it is an infrastructure-cocktail of seven sub-projects, all together, being aimed at boosting Kenya's position as a leading logistic handling and transport hub in the East African Community bloc, and the Horn of Africa.[54] The key components of the project are: 32 berths at Manda bay in Lamu, which is envisioned to expand Kenya's inter-continental freight handling; national and intracontinental highways, particularly linking Lamu to South Sudan, and Lamu to Addis-Ababa; Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) lines along the same routes; oil-pipelines (Juba-Lokichar-Lamu, for crude oil, and Lamu-Isiolo-Moyala-Addis-Ababa, for refined product); three international airports and three resort cities each in the counties of Lamu, Isiolo and Turkana[55] (Map 2).
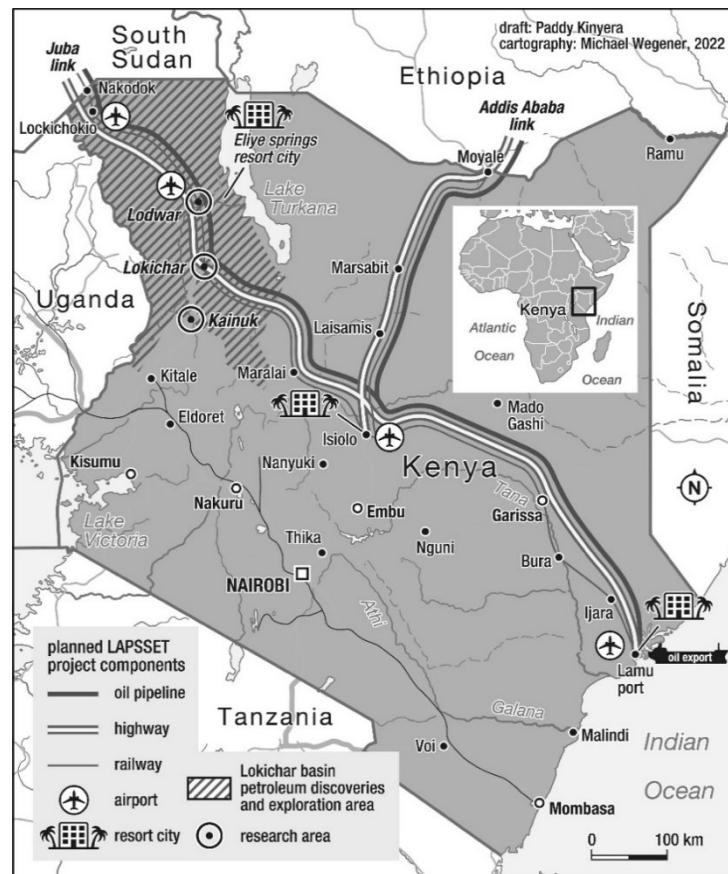
Map 2: Key Components of Kenya's LAPSSET Project

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54 Government of Kenya, 'About the Vision', Kenya Vision 2030, accessed 17 March 2022, https://vision2030.go.ke/about-vision-2030/; Government of Kenya, 'Kenya Vision 2030: The Popular Version' (Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 2007).

55 Government of Kenya, 'LAPSSET Projects', A Seamless Connected Africa: Infinite Possibilities, Endless Opportunities, 2021, https://www.lapsset.go.ke/#1461328856794-2dee9bba-e774.

Seen from this collection of multiple infrastructure projects, the underlying logic of the LAPSSET corridor is to enhance different dimensions of growth opportunities in sectors such as tourism alongside the grand plan of the country becoming a logistic transit hub for landlocked countries such as South Sudan. The opportunities as well as the fear that marginalized communities could be further pushed to the edges of survival is a mainstay of local narratives around the project. As recent studies suggest, the localization of anticipations of the opportunities that are (to be) brought about by the project have raised ethno-political and socioeconomic stakes, laying foundations for sentiments of belonging, a fundamental expression of citizenship among pastoralists (Mkutu, Müller-Koné, and Owino 2021).

In the north-eastern region of Turkana, three components of the LAPSSET project are envisioned to draw the Turkana communities closer to infrastructural modernity—a modernity which is contemporaneously defined by particular sets of infrastructures (see Larkin 2013; Niewöhner 2015). In this case, the planned resort city at the Eliye Springs (west of Lake Turkana) will boost tourism in the region; planned oil-pipeline will transport crude oil produced from the oil-rich Lokichar basin to Lamu (part of the oil revenues are expected to be channelled back to the communities); and a highway will make the region more accessible to boost local, national and international mobility and trade, among others. By and large, Turkana region, like never before, is viewed from the optics of an infrastructural modernity marked by objects of affluence, speed and comfort.

Although different components of the project are at different stages of completion elsewhere, there hasn't been much progress in Turkana, where the most important interpretation of the project is its link with Tullow's extraction of crude oil from the Lokichar basin. This interpretation is made in light, on the one hand, of the idea of that once oil goes to the market, the Turkana will be rich and, on the other, an anticipated institutional re-organisation of socio-economic and cultural foundations of land ownership (Interview, Member of Turkana Council of Elders, Lokichar: February 2020).

5 Consentient Citizenship and Mega Infrastructures

East Africa's infrastructure vigour—the so-called "infrastructure-turn" (Dye 2020) continues to attract continental praise. During the 7th PIDA week (28th February to 2nd March 2022) held in Nairobi, for example, the African Union Development Agency of the New Partnership for African Development (AUDA-NEPAD) awarded the regional bloc—the East African Community—for its efforts to move infrastructure projects from conceptualization phases, to phases of allocation of funds for preliminary studies and designs.[56] If such an award is important at all, then it is probably fair to take seriously the research findings of Kannan Lakmeeharan and colleagues (2020), that warranted their framing of much of Africa's infrastructure investment situation as infrastructure paradox referred to earlier.

The said paradoxes, an argument can be made, emerge from contradictions in engagements among stakeholders in relation to the real and imagined effects of the projects at the local levels.

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[56] See East African Community, 'EAC Secretariat Receives Top Award during 7th PIDA Week Held in Nairobi', Infrastructure, 2022, https://www.eac.int/press-releases/150-infrastructure/2389-eac-secretariat-receives-top-award-during-7th-pida-week-held-in-nairobi.

Yet such engagements are intended to create a broad-based understanding of, and consent about the projects, the lack of which often slows the process and sometimes blocks the implementation of the projects. That the EACOP and the LAPSSET have to be implemented at all costs, it is important that consent is sought for, or invented at different points of the projects, making for a field of different modes of relations among the stakeholders. The foundation of consent is built around two competing perspectives.

There is the risk perspective, in which project-related negative effects are weighed against its benefits both in the short and long term. This is often curated in extensive preliminary risk analyses, conventionally undertaken in the form of tailored environmental and social impact assessments (EISAs). Although such preliminary studies often identify risks associated with the implementation of different projects in concrete terms, critical empirical studies indicate that the risks are never dealt with comprehensively, particularly in the underdeveloped world (see Carroll 2012). Yet, as part of the regulatory responsibility of the International Financial Institutions (IFCs), local communities are being encouraged to play active roles in setting conditions for the implementation of projects, as the developers make attempts to satisfy such conditions (see Harvey and Bice 2014).

Above all other socioeconomic risks, studies have showed that the implementation of infrastructure projects, particularly in the global south where the predominantly poor communities live off the land tend to bring about the risk of land loss and socioeconomic displacements (see Kochore 2016; Li 2014). As a result, it is suggested that actual project conditions have to be understood in terms of the socioeconomic context of their implementation—that is, the lived realities of different social groups (how they interact on day-to-day basis); their cultures (sets of shared beliefs and values); their communitarianism; among others (see Vanclay 2002).

In December 2019, a group of Kenyan leaders from the Turkana region (with funding from International Alert – Kenya) visited Uganda's emerging oil-city of Hoima and had discussions with the key institutional actors in the Uganda's oil industry. The discussions focused on how Uganda is approaching its future with oil, particularly the strategy for the country to use its oil to transform the lives of the citizens; and what the community leaders from Turkana can learn and take back to Kenya. A question was posed by A Kenyan participant to a key official from the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) about how the Ugandan government has planned the spreading of opportunities to the local communities: The response of the Ugandan official is worth quoting:

> Every year before the companies begin implementation, we look at their work programs. We look at the procurement plans they are proposing for the year… [such as] the contracts at the end of the quota. [Then], we also have the national supplier database where they register. These are some of the tools that help us understand work programs [of foreign companies]. When we see that [a company is] going to come in and do ABCD, we come in to say okay, this is what is going to be done. Which

of these do you propose will go to Ugandan companies? They make their proposal, and then they go into the procurement process.[57]

For Uganda, the opportunities for oil-related transformations are interpreted in terms of a national-level value addition: that is, the sustainably retainable value that different project operations could bring to the country, most especially, in terms of local capacity enhancement; enterprise development; knowledge and technology transfer and the employment of local labour.[58] The EACOP is one of the oil-projects that are associated with a wide range of opportunities both in the short, intermediate and long run. In Kenya, there are indications that the Turkana are seeing the LAPSSET through the lens of the oil industry. As noted by a sub-county official in Lokichar, the "LAPSSET means up-scaling the early oil pilot scheme (EOPS)" which has been the epitome of hope of a socio-economically better future for the local communities (pers. com. February 2020).

Built around the idea of the frontier, the 'emptiness' of an area may mean its assumed unproductivity, as, for example, is the description often made of the drylands of northern Kenya; or the inferiority in value, as is the case with the rural areas of the global south. The two infrastructure projects are, therefore, possible ways in which 'the empty' can be filled; the 'valueless' can be made valuable, and the peripheral is connected with the centre. But since the processes of making these infrastructures entail balancing risks and benefits, they often lay the foundation for particular modes of relations between "those in power [who presume particular forms of emptiness] and those not-so-powerful", who become the targets of strategic re-creation (Van Wolputte 2013: 2). Power is an important element in the process of manufacturing consent. It is only those who have access to and control (re)sources of power that engage in the practice of enacting consent.

In the context of the two projects, the consent of the local population, to have their areas subjected to such infrastructural reconfiguration have partly been undertaken through different functions of power, operating on the realities of the local communities and the kind of future that they envision and anticipate. In the next section, we examine three ways in which power is deployed to invent consentient citizenship in relation to the two infrastructural frontiers.

The government knowledge of movement

The first notable mode of invention of consent is what we describe as the government of knowledge movement—that is, the regulation of flow of information about activities related with the two infrastructure projects. The regulation of knowledge flow has two dimensions: on the one hand, there is the deployment of resources of power to contain critical perspectives about the development of the projects, often treated by state agencies as attitudes of sabotage. In relation to this, systems of knowledge production and information flow such as academic research are areas of regulation. In Uganda, for example, local communities along the pipeline's right-of-way have been told by what they describe as the "EACOP People" not to speak to anyone, should they be approached and asked questions about their interactions with project activities. A local council

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[57] Official from the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) speaking at a workshop organized by International Alert – Kenya in Uganda (December 2019).

[58] Ibid.

chairperson of a village in Lwengo that partly lies within the right-of-way pointed this out during a conversation in early 2020:

> The 'EACOP people'[59] told the PAPs [project affected persons] not to speak with people that they do not know. They told us to keep ourselves away from wrong information that we will be getting from many people who will be coming to us to talk about the pipeline... that when someone called us, we should refer that person to them... because such people will confuse us (pers. com.: January 2020)

It is believed that once the contact between the local communities and the often radically critical non-state actors is regulated, the flow of negative information that bear the possibility to trigger resistance to the project is contained. In Rakai and some parts of Kyotera, for example, where many of the PAPs filed complaints about project activities, critical voices from civil society organizations such as Global Rights Alert (GRA) are said to be triggering these complaints. However, according to the authorities, the local leaders were also to blame for what has been described as the "inability to do a good job"—that is, the failure in making attempts to counter the narratives of the civil society organizations by, among other things, beseeching the PAPs to support the project (pers. com.: February, 2022).

The second dimension of the regulation of flow of information is associated with the power of narratives—that is, the very nature of information that is passed on to the project riparian communities. The notion of "good job" cited above entails packaging particularly positive narratives about the EACOP project—narratives that would make the local communities see themselves as beneficiaries of the projects, other than social entities who are merely negatively affected. In Kenya's Turkana area, information about the LAPSSET to the communities, for example, has been packaged with powerful ideas of wealth and good life for which the pastoral communities should aspire. Most importantly, this has been done in ways that link the LAPSSET to the oil industry. So, since oil in Turkana is envisioned as the commodity for the region's wealthy future and the impetus for transition to urbanity, the LAPSSET is the vessel that will deliver this vision.

Although this is an attractive narrative to pass on to a population that is at the margins of state benevolence, there counteracting voices among educated members of the Turkana communities that have scrutinised the narratives of the state and its agents. These relatively knowledgeable members suggest that the authorities and the project developers could simply be seeking consent from the locals by building such attractive narratives. A community activist in Lokichar argued that, the Turkana are disadvantaged because...

> ...97% of [them] are illiterate pastoralists [who can be] lied to... They have no idea pertaining oil and gas industry because when you talk about oil, they will not be able to tell you much. When [the Central government and Tullow-oil] came they said [to the local communities]: 'once the oil is produced, you people will be rich'... and the locals were happy because we have heard about Nigeria, about Ghana... and about big

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[59] The so-called "EACOP People" are the institutional actors such as New Plan and the Petroleum Authority of Uganda.

> [cities] like Lagos and Abuja… now we thought even Lokichar is going to be the same way. So, we received this industry in good faith (pers. com.: February, 2020)

The "good faith" with which communities receive projects were based on the information they are given, regardless of whether such information is realistic, or are simply strategic ploys to win over local communities and minimise resistances. It is upon such good faith that consent—the so-called "social license to operate"—is built (Vanclay 2017; Harvey and Bice 2014).

Breaking foundations of collectivism

The second mode of invention of consentient citizenship is by breaking foundations of *socio-material collectivism*. The two infrastructure projects have significant socio-material dimensions that have been widely viewed through the lens of collective good. The term "project affected persons" (PAPs) which conventionally refers to groups of individuals, households and communities whose daily activities are impinged upon by mega projects is a problematic tag. With this identity, the attitude of 'the collective' through which voices of decent are raised against projects are often strong and tend to draw significant attention. In Uganda, activities around oil exploitation continues to bring about project-affected communities in different locations.

Situations of massive infrastructure-led displacements, such as one that was undertaken in 2017 to pave the way for the construction of the Kabaale Industrial Park in Hoima raised significant collective outcry from the affected communities. In many ways, the locals (who formed solidarity groups such as the "Oil Refinery Residents Association" (ORRA) challenged the authorities to meet their collective demands, using what can be described as collective social power—the power of collectivism. The demands included timely and adequate compensation before being dispossessed of their land marked for project development. This kind of demand created contentious modes of relations, which among other things, compelled the authorities to bring authoritarian measures into the relations. The state deployed both coercion and strategic deception and cultivation of ignorance to force consent.

For the EACOP project, although individuals and households were differently affected by the determination of the project's right-of-way, their institutional identity of "project affected persons" (PAPs) laid the foundation for what in the view of state authorities are pockets of problematic solidarities. The collective 'we' and 'ours' (as PAPs) is more prominent than the singular 'I' and 'mine'. PAPs in Luanda sub-county, in Rakai for example, collectively petitioned the government and called for a proper mechanism of dealing with their collective grievances, particularly in regard to the value of commodities that they were offered as compensation: "they rejected the rates, and complained to the district…" (pers. com.: March, 2021).

Asked what response the PAPs received from the district, a community conflict monitor, who through her work with Global Rights Alert—a civil society organization had interacted with many of the PAPs as well as the district officials pointed that the district authorities referred them to the "EACOP people" who they approached, but…

> they told the PAPs that their issues will be sent to Kampala and they will be addressed on individual basis. Some PAPs were even told to go to Kampala, but they refused because they did not know what was going to happen. They don't want to talk about the issues in public gatherings… (pers. com.: March, 2021).

In Buliisa, for example, a similar strategy was deployed. In the context of the Tilenga project in Ngwedo, Total Energies and its agencies deployed locally recruited community liaison officers (CLOs) to undertake door-to-door invention of consent—that is, to speak to and convince individual PAPs in privacy, to accept and sign the declaration (of compensation) forms. Individuals felt acknowledged by the government and the companies once they were spoken to at their homes. One respondent expressed how her mother was delighted to receive CLOs with her papers at her home:

> After speaking to her individually, I could see that she was going to accept to be relocated… She signed the forms… the strategy of visiting her at home worked, yet she has all this while, been against the idea of being relocated (pers. com.: December, 2019).

In Kenya, the institutional formalisation of land ownership by registration that is being encouraged among highly communitarian pastoralists can be viewed as a process of de-collectivization of property ownership. Among the Turkana, for example, the communal ownership and use of land has posed a significant challenge to the implementation of development projects, particularly those that demand the acquisition of land such as the LAPSSET. There are contradictions and frictions about who the central government should contact on matters pertaining to land. While the sub-county officials argue that land in Turkana is held in trust by the county government on behalf of different pastoral clans, some voices from the council of elders argue that negotiating land acquisition by anyone should be brought down to the "right people"— the clan elders who govern the day-to-day land-use activities of different clans (pers. com.: February, 2020).

In light of this, the institutional gesture of reconfiguring land ownership through registration has instigated mixed perceptions. There is a point of view from which this as regarded as a strategic move by the state to break the foundations of collectivism that continues to render project-related land acquisition in Turkana contentious and difficult to effect. This point of view considers the registration of land as an institutional strategy that is expected to lay the foundation for consentient citizenship whereby, other than the state having to deal with an often-resistant collective voice, it would rather negotiate and arrive at a point of consent with specific institutionally recognized land owners. As explained by a member of a community empowerment group—the Turkana Empowerment Advocacy Group (TEAG) that was formed in light of heightened oil activities in the region,

> …the idea of land registration by the National Land Commission is good, although it directly works against the practice of communal land ownership. The county authorities do not like it, and some communities also still do not buy the idea. But what the Kenyan government is trying to do is to attach a name to each of these pieces of what we know as communal land. You cannot negotiate with the community… but it is easy to negotiate with individuals (pers. com.: February, 2020).

The other point of view is agreeable to the idea of land registration, a direct contrast of the faction that is coy about this institutional endeavour. To this faction, the county leadership under Governor Josephat Koli Nanok has not given the right information to the Turkana people about the benefits of land registration. Asked whether she had registered their land already, as per the

guidelines of the National Land Commission, a respondent indicated that there are conflicting views within Turkana itself:

> The current governor [refused], imagine. He wanted to register the whole Turkana land, including our *ngirerea*[60] in his name. We have already submitted a petition against that... Let me tell you one thing: The Turkana people are now much wiser because the elite created awareness regarding land issues (pers. com.: February, 2022).

It is not uncommon for mega projects to bring about collective aspirations and micro socio-material solidarities that are not always easy to align with trans- and inter-(national) processes. The fundamental contradiction is that the foundations for these micro-solidarities are often laid by the very institutional processes that later seek to undo them. For instance, the production of project-based subjectivities in the form of project-affected-persons (PAPs). In the context of Uganda's EACOP project, that the PAPs in some areas were non-consenting to what comes with their subjectivities, the state and its agencies have had to micro-manage them, by individualizing their concerns. In the Kenyan LAPSSET case, the collective view of pastoral communities such as the Turkana as a homogenous group, and the inherent clan-based divides are two competing perspectives that have rendered consent to the LAPSSET project a difficult undertaking. The push for land registration in the names of individuals and clans, as opposed to land being held as a communal property by the county government can be viewed as an attempt to break the foundation of collectivism, so as to enact new modes of micro-governable socio-material relations.

Enactment of corporate citizenship

The third mode of invention of consentient citizenship in the context of mega projects is what we describe as the *enactment of corporate citizenship* that has been evident in the two projects. Corporate citizenship is used here to refer to socioeconomic relations that are triggered by investment by major corporations in the development of infrastructures of transnational significance. In the context of the two projects treated here, corporate citizenship has two dimensions: the first has to do with the role of corporate agencies in building particular modes of relations with communities in the areas where they operate. This is commonly known as corporate social responsibility (CSR) (see Carroll 2005). The second dimension has to do the attempt to transform communities into corporate actors, by enacting in them (what Tania Li (2010: 405) refers to as) "neoliberal multiculturalism". In both the LAPSSET and the EACOP projects, there have been endeavours to enact corporate citizenship that reflect the principles of good conduct of business by multinational corporations, by way of modelling relations and interactions between local communities and project operations.

In Uganda, apart from different forms of corporate social investments that directly target specific deficiencies among the local communities—such as improvement of infrastructures of common good like roads, hospitals, and schools, there is a continued reiteration of the need for Ugandans to be corporate actors in the EACOP project, as well as many other components of the country's oil industry. This is part of the so-called "national (or local) content"—a strategy by which certain ventures have been exclusively ring-fenced for Ugandan enterprises. To operationalize this, the

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[60] A portion of grazing area owned by a particular Turkana community (usually a clan) under an elder.

Ugandan government has developed an online corporate information and codification portal—the national supplier database (NSD), a digital relational space between the government and potential corporate actors in the oil industry. Local entities who aspire to be corporate actors in the EACOP project are institutionally conditioned to submit their business details to this database.

This information is then centrally verified, and the enterprise is issued an NSD code, and then marked with citizenship tag: "Ugandan or Non-Ugandan" (Table 1). However, the submission of an enterprise's information to the database and the receipt of the NSD Code do not necessarily guarantee participation in the oil industry, but it guarantees relations of hope, akin to what Ngala Chome (2020) describes, in the case of the LAPSSET project in Lamu, as "economies of anticipation".

Table1: Extract from the online database that expresses institutionalized corporate mentalities in Uganda's oil industry (*pending verification).

NSD Code	Legal Name	Entity Type	Major Activity	Activity Division	Physical Address	Co. Origin
NS-10011/17xxx	Atlas Cargo Systems Limited	Company (Limited by Shares)	S-Other Service Activities	Activities of membership organizations		PV*
NS-12703/19xxx	DSN International Ltd	Company (Limited by Shares)	M-Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	Other professional, scientific and technical activities		Non-Ugandan
NS-11484/18xxx	Nambafu Namungalu & Co. Advocates	Partnership (General Partnership)	S-Other Service Activities	Other personal service activities		Ugandan

The NSD has at least three purposes. First, it is a framework for institutional standardization of corporate mentalities and relations in the oil industry by way of identification of entities that qualify to play active entrepreneurial roles in the oil industry. Second, it is a system of codification of corporate citizenship with a pre-determined framework of consent to and control of institutionally pre-determined standards of operations in the oil industry. Third and most important, the NSD is a system of power as it defines who can and cannot be involved in the oil industry, and who has the technical capacity to decide what is standard and what is not. As of February 2022, more than 1600 enterprises had submitted their particulars to the NSD, with over 90% of the submissions pending verification from the authorities, before they can become codified.

In Kenya's Turkana, the enactment of consentient corporate citizenship is demonstrable by the attempt to pass on investment benefits to the local communities. This resulted from the demand by local pressure groups involving women, youth and organised advocacy agencies such as the Turkana Empowerment Advocacy Group (TEAG). The social investments ranged from the provision of education bursaries to members of the local communities; looping local enterprises to business schemes, particularly the logistic supply chain; and direct tangible support to communities such as water trucking during times of drought. These practices, widely known as corporate social responsibility (CSR) are founded on the principle that corporate entities should

make decisions and follow lines of actions that are desirable for the society in different contexts of business operations (Carroll 2008: 25).

In the frontier regions of the global south, CSR practices have increasingly become strategies for enhancing consent—often termed as "social license" (Esteves 2008: 41)—among local communities particularly in situations where mega infrastructure projects bear the likelihood of undesirably reconfiguring the socio-material realities. From the perspective of the Turkana elite, for example, there are resounding fears that the local pastoralists are likely to be hoodwinked by (what one interlocutor termed as) "small things" so that they continue supporting infrastructure projects that are associated with the oil industry (pers. com.: February 2020). Although such "small things" have continued to mediate the relations between the pastoralists and the project operators, there is the question of sustainability, not just of the "small things", but also of their mediating effect on corporate-social relations.

In the context of infrastructure developments in Turkana's oil-rich Lokichar basin, for example, the continued flow of such corporate gestures were tied to the level of submission by the locals to project operations. The water-trucking scheme during drought, a respondent narrated, gives a good impression of its purpose:

> There was an arrangement to provide us with some water with trucks… not piped water. Trucks took water to the villages where there was no water. So, when there were demonstrations and the [Turkana] people said they want [a portion of what is to be the oil] revenue, they said [they] won't supply [us] with water. So, this water was there for a bargain (pers. Com.: February 2020).

In a number of ways, therefore, the two infrastructure projects are fields of enactment of corporate citizenship that is fundamentally built around relations of different dimensions of power that navigate slippery terrains of attitudes, desires and aspirations of different project-affected-communities.

6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we bring forward the understanding that infrastructure projects produce spaces of different modalities of relations among entangled entities. The making of infrastructural frontiers tends to bear high potentials for contentions at different sites, triggering strategic deployment of different technologies and resources of power. In view of this, relations of consent whether organic or invented, help operationalize the implementation of the projects. Negative attitudes towards project operations by the so-called project affected persons (PAPs) are often counteracted by a number of strategies—three of which have been outlined in this chapter. The EACOP and the LAPSSET projects in Uganda and Kenya respectively are not just techno-geometries of vision, power and development; they are also inherently fields of enactment of consentient mentalities among the project's riparian communities.

The fact that these projects bring the peripheral regions of the two countries into contact with the rest of the metropolitan world of neoliberal capitalism, this contribution adds to the frontier debate, how mobility infrastructures highlight the interconnections between remote frontiers and the metropole: that is, the endeavour by the metropole to extend its reach to the periphery and

the periphery's potential to be absorbed into the order of the metropole. That citizens are at the heart of the making of infrastructural frontiers, they are constituent targets of development that, in most parts of the developing world, need to be mobilized to support and be absorbed into the operational dynamics of what Tania Li (2020) terms as "neoliberal multiculturalism". In essence, they are to be strategically rallied to consent to project operations, even when the immediate effects of such operations are negative to their socio-material realties.

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Senghor et les expositions du Musée Dynamique de Dakar

Babacar Mbaye Diop

Abstract

On March 31, 1966, Léopold Sédar Senghor, President of the Republic of Senegal, inaugurated the Dynamic Museum in Dakar. The following day, April 1st, the Museum hosted the main exhibition of the first world festival of Negro arts. Senghor has made this Museum a cosmopolitan place and a high level of encounters and dialogue of cultures in which every year an artist of international dimension is invited. Thus, exhibitions of works by great artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Kandinsky, Miró, Marc Chagall, Picasso, Hundertwasser, Soulages, Alfred Manessier, Olivier Debré and Iba Ndiaye have marked the history of this Museum.

1 Introduction

> « Or donc, nous avons formé le projet d'organiser, chaque année, à partir de 1973 et pendant le premier trimestre, une Saison de Dakar, où les arts plastiques occuperaient une place de choix avec, comme hôte d'honneur, au Musée Dynamique, un artiste de qualité internationale » (Senghor 1977a: 324).

Dans le Dakar-Matin[61] du 02 juillet 1964, le conseiller culturel du Président Senghor, André Terrisse déclarait, à la veille de la pose de la première pierre, que le Musée Dynamique « sera la tête de pont enfin jetée entre l'Occident, l'Orient et le Monde Noir, le point d'osmose entre les valeurs spécifiques de la Négritude et de la Civilisation de l'Universel »[62]. Léopold Sédar Senghor, dans son allocution à l'inauguration du musée, le 31 mars 1966, disait déjà que le Musée Dynamique « sera le vrai centre du Premier Festival mondial des arts nègres, qui en sera, dans l'avenir, le témoignage le plus signifiant » (Senghor 1977a: 64). Construit par les architectes

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[61] Journal officiel, ancêtre du journal *Le Soleil.*

[62] Dakar-Matin du 02 juillet 1964.

français et italien Chesneau et Verola, ce bâtiment à péristyle s'inspire de l'architecture de la Grèce antique et reflète ainsi le dialogue des cultures, cher à Senghor.

Jusqu'à sa première fermeture en 1977 – j'y reviendrai – , le Musée Dynamique a accueilli de grandes expositions internationales parmi lesquelles : l'exposition phare du premier festival mondial des arts nègres : « «Art nègre» : sources, évolution, expansion » en 1966, des dessins de Léonard de Vinci en 1970[63], Kandinsky et Miró en 1970, Chagall en 1971, Picasso en 1972, Hundertwasser en 1973, Soulages en 1974, l'exposition « Art contemporain du Sénégal »[64] en 1974, Manessier en 1976, Iba Ndiaye en 1977 (Huchard 1989, 2010).

Même si chaque exposition présente un intérêt particulier, qu'est-ce que les lie toutes ? Senghor voulait-il approfondir ou rendre plus concrètes ses idées sur le dialogue et la rencontre des cultures ? Si Senghor a décidé de fermer le musée après ces grandes expositions, ses idées sur l'art et la négritude située dans l'universalité sont-elles noyées au fil des expositions ? Était-il à la hauteur de ses ambitions ? Ce musée était-il une utopie dont Senghor aurait pris conscience ? L'histoire de ce musée n'est pas que celle de ces expositions prestigieuses, mais aussi celle des réactions à cette expérience unique en Afrique. Comment donc le public et les artistes sénégalais ont vécu ces évènements ? Si l'enthousiasme de Senghor était bien connu, quel était celui du public et des artistes sénégalais ?

Ces grandes expositions au Sénégal confirment l'idée que leur prometteur, Senghor, avait de la rencontre et du dialogue des cultures. Au-delà du musée « imaginaire » et « universel » dont chantait Malraux, Senghor avait mis en place un musée réel, cosmopolite et sans frontières qui accueillait des artistes et visiteurs étrangers. Car si ces artistes de renoms ont franchi les murs du Musée Dynamique, c'est qu'ils ont vécu « la rencontre des valeurs culturelles des différentes ethnies et nations au niveau de l'Universel »[65].

Parmi les raisons pour lesquelles Senghor avait choisi d'exposer ou de faire d'exposer ces artistes, « il y avait souvent les analogies, les similitudes ou les convergences de l'œuvre de l'artiste avec l'art nègre » (Sylla 2002, 239). Il voulait ainsi mettre en pratique sa théorie de l'esthétique de la négritude : « l'enracinement et l'ouverture, mais également l'humanisme et le dialogue des cultures et des civilisations, que véhiculaient les œuvres des artistes en question » (Sylla 2002, 239).

Toutes ces expositions ou pratiques muséales en Afrique ont un héritage enraciné dans le colonialisme. Aujourd'hui encore, et plus de soixante ans après les indépendances africaines, des musées africains qui n'ont pas encore choisi une direction proprement africaine continuent à

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[63] Une exposition itinérante de l'Unesco. Des dessins sélectionnés en 1952 à l'occasion de la commémoration du 500eme anniversaire de la naissance Léonard de Vinci.

[64] Cette exposition sera ensuite montée au Grand Palais à Paris, mais aussi dans beaucoup de pays européens, en Amérique et en Asie.

[65] Senghor 1977b.

exposer dans un mimétisme occidental. Le président de l'ICOM[66], Alpha Omar Konaré[67], déclarait déjà en 1991, à Lomé, qu'il fallait « tuer le modèle occidental des musées». Il nous invitait ainsi à réinventer le musée africain, à remettre en cause l'institution muséale héritée de l'époque coloniale.

Toutes les grandes puissances occidentales ont leur musée consacré à l'art africain. Le développement des musées ou collections d'objets d'art africain en Occident coïncide avec la colonisation et l'essor de l'action missionnaire. La plupart de ces collections sont, en effet, le résultat de pillages militaires, de vols ou de ventes illégales. Plusieurs voix se sont levées pour réclamer le retour de ce patrimoine artistique en Afrique. Mais ce retour passe par une décolonisation et une refondation des musées d'Afrique.

L'histoire du Musée Dynamique permet de lire la décolonisation des musées africains et la question de la restitution du patrimoine africain exposé dans les musées occidentaux et sa présentation en Afrique.

Cette étude ne pourra pas revenir sur toutes les expositions du musée dynamique[68] ni sur l'histoire du premier festival mondial des arts nègres[69] – de toute façon un seul article ne m'aurait nullement permis de faire ce travail. Je me contenterai ici de ne traiter que quelques expositions qui ont laissé une empreinte toujours vive dans le milieu culturel sénégalais, celles dont Senghor usa de ses relations privilégiées pour exposer de grands noms tels que : l'exposition « Art nègre » du premier festival mondial des arts nègres, mais également celles consacrées à Chagall, Picasso, Soulages, Manessier et Iba Ndiaye. Ce texte proposé ici s'appuie sur une lecture approfondie des différents catalogues d'expositions ainsi que des entretiens recueillis auprès de quelques témoins de cet âge d'or au Sénégal.

Je m'intéresse d'abord à l'exposition "Art nègre" du premier Festival mondial des arts nègres, puis à quelques expositions individuelles des artistes connus que je viens de mentionner, suivi de la politique muséale de Senghor. Dans une quatrième et dernière partie, je montre comment cette histoire du Musée Dynamique permet de redéfinir les musées africains surtout avec la question très actuelle de la restitution des objets d'art africain.

L'exposition « Art nègre » du premier festival mondial des arts nègres

Inauguré le 31 mars 1966, le Musée Dynamique ouvre ses portes à partir du 1er avril pour accueillir l'exposition principale du premier festival mondial des arts nègres : « « Art nègre » : sources, évolution, expansion » consacrée aux arts anciens d'Afrique. L'objectif était d'échanger

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[66] International Council of Museums (Conseil International des Musées).

[67] Alpha Oumar Konaré a été président de l'ICOM de 1989 à 1992 avant de devenir président de la République du Mali de 1992 à 2012.

[68] De 1966 à sa dernière fermeture en 1990, le Musée Dynamique a accueilli plus de 50 expositions.

[69] Lire à ce propos l'article de Ficquet et Gallimardet 2009.

avec tous les peuples du monde en leur révélant « l'essence de l'Art Nègre, son unité et sa riche diversité » (Mbengue 1974 : 44).

Une équipe de sept commissaires est créée. Elle était composée d'africains et d'européens spécialistes des civilisations et des arts africains : le muséologue français Georges-Henri Rivière et le dahoméen Alexandre Adandé pilotaient le commissariat général, le français Pierre Meauzé et son adjointe Jacqueline Delange, le camerounais Engelbert Mveng et son assistant sénégalais Salif Diop et le Suisse Jean Gabus, directeur du musée d'Ethnographie et de l'Institut d'ethnologie de Neuchâtel, consultant auprès de l'Unesco pour l'exposition, chargé de la muséographie.

Conçu à partir d'un programme muséologique de Jean Gabus, quelques 480 objets d'art, prêtés par de nombreux musées et collectionneurs à travers le monde, ont été exposés. Le R.P. Engelbert Mveng explique, dans le Catalogue de l'exposition, la démarche des commissaires africains chargés de trouver un peu partout en Afrique des objets précieux de l'art nègre : « « Nous ne voulons plus être des parents pauvres des consommateurs de civilisations ». Et c'est pourquoi à Dakar, il a été retenu qu'il appartiendra « à l'Afrique de parler d'elle-même, à ses propres enfants et aux hommes de tous les pays » (Huchard 2010: 228).

L'exposition a été présentée au public avec un plan scénographique composé d'un prélude avec des chefs-d'œuvre dogons, balubas du Kassaï, du Bénin ; une première partie relevant d'une dimension historique avec des objets culturels antiques (Nok, Ifé, Bénin, Zimbabwe, Éthiopie, le bassin du Tchad) pour attester de l'antériorité des civilisations africaines ; une deuxième partie d'une dimension géographique pour souligner la diversité de l'art nègre et de celle de l'Afrique ; une troisième partie sur les aspects de la vie (religieuse, politique, militaire, sociale, économique et financière) ; une quatrième sur le message de l'art nègre (avec des costumes, des bijoux, des masques, l'architecture, les mobiliers) pour montrer sa finalité, sa signification profonde, sa fonction vitale qui est le fondement de sa beauté esthétique ; et une cinquième partie sur le Dialogue avec le monde seul gage d'une civilisation de l'Universel.

L'exposition était conçue pour un double objectif : révéler au monde une esthétique négro-africaine à travers la dispersion du patrimoine artistique africain et à partir de là créer de nouvelles identités. Voilà pourquoi, après Dakar, l'exposition a été aussi présentée au Grand Palais à Paris avec les mêmes œuvres du 1er juin à la fin août 1966. Pour la sélection des œuvres, Mveng et Gabus se sont rendus dans plusieurs pays d'Afrique, d'Europe et aux États-Unis. Ce projet est issu de la volonté de deux hommes de culture : Senghor et Malraux : ce fut une « manifestation insolite et audacieuse, où se sont unis, sans se mêler, les concepts de la plus jeune Europe et de la plus vieille Afrique, novatrice dans son principe et ardue dans sa conduite, chimérique à ses débuts et heureuse à sa fin, signal de muséographie moderne et signe de fraternité humaine, l'exposition d'art nègre » (Rivière 1966: XXXIII).

Cette exposition avait réuni, pour la première fois en Afrique, des œuvres d'art africain dispersées dans les musées et collections privées du monde et celles conservées en Afrique. Plusieurs musées d'Afrique, d'Europe, des États-Unis et des collectionneurs privés ont prêté leurs œuvres les plus prestigieuses. Un grand défi muséographique a été présenté pour réaliser cette exposition : des centaines d'œuvres provenant des musées français, belges, anglais, nigérians, des États-Unis, des chefferies traditionnelles du Cameroun et du Dahomey. Les prêts d'œuvres d'art sont venus « de

nombreux gouvernements de pays amis, de leurs institutions publiques et privées, et de leurs collectionneurs » (Huchard 2010: 278).

Vingt-huit (28) pays ont participé au festival avec leurs artistes, des experts et des œuvres d'art traditionnels et contemporains. Cette grande exposition a permis d'illustrer la négritude par l'art nègre. L'expression « *art nègre* », on le sait, a été utilisée pour la première fois par les artistes plasticiens européens dont les plus célèbres sont Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, André Derain, Georges Braque, Maurice de Vlaminck, etc. Picasso dira que l'art africain, c'est « ce que l'imagination humaine a produit de plus puissant et de plus beau » (Picasso 1999: 10). On comprend dès lors pourquoi, selon Senghor, l'art africain a inspiré l'art moderne, plus particulièrement la peinture et la sculpture de l'École de Paris : « Je le sais, écrit-il, pour avoir fréquenté ses peintres les plus grands comme Pablo qui étaient Méditerranéens, comme Pablo Picasso, Vieira da Silva et Pierre Soulages » (Senghor 1991: 8).

Ils ont tous trouvé dans l'art africain leurs propres préoccupations esthétiques. Vlaminick vendit à Derain le fameux masque blanc fang du Gabon pour lequel il éprouve « une sensation profonde d'humanité », les visages des *Demoiselles d'Avignon* de Picasso rappellent certains masques fangs et annoncent le cubisme et l'artiste fut ébranlé par un masque baoulé, Apollinaire des fétiches de bois, Paul Guillaume avait son goût décidé pour l'art africain (Courthion 1999 : 20), Matisse était étonné de voir comment est conçu le langage sculptural des statues d'origine africaine (Courthion 1999 : 17). D'une statue achetée par Matisse, Derain affirma que celle-ci « est aussi belle que la Vénus de Milo » et Picasso : « c'est plus bô ». Le sculpteur Jacques Lipchitz n'hésite pas à déclarer que les artistes africains ont eu un impact incontestable sur les créations occidentales : « leur vraie compréhension de la proportion, leur sentiment du dessin, leur sens aigu de la réalité nous ont fait entrevoir, oser même, beaucoup de choses » (Courthion 1999 : 11).

Les arts plastiques négro-africains ont ainsi influencé l'art européen.[70] Ces artistes européens ont, en effet, toujours manifesté l'intérêt qu'ils portaient aux objets d'art africain. L'art nègre va ainsi « contribuer à la construction de la « modernité universelle » sur laquelle doit reposer le dialogue des civilisations » (Huchard 2010: 220).

Mais revenons à cette première exposition du Musée Dynamique dédiée l'exposition principale du premier festival mondial des arts nègres : « « Art nègre » : sources, évolution, expansion ». Avec toute la richesse de l'art africain traditionnel, elle est, pour Senghor, la participation de la Négritude à la Civilisation de l'Universel. Elle a permis de « dire la fonction de l'Art Nègre dans la vie des peuples noirs. La fonction, c'est-à-dire les signes mais, essentiellement, l'au-delà des signes qu'est leur signification ».[71] La fonction de l'art nègre est de « toujours actualiser son objet », c'est-à-dire sa matière, alors que sa nature est de « toujours exprimer cet objet avec les mêmes signes, dans le même style profond qui est précisément, de le styliser ».[72] Cette exposition avait pour but non seulement de défendre l'art africain traditionnel, mais elle devait aussi montrer qu'il est « une

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[70] Lire l'adresse à la Nation de Senghor du 19 mars 1966 dans laquelle il prépare l'esprit des Sénégalais dans un appel solennel dans Huchard (2010 : 230-232).

[71] Senghor, « Ni opposition ni racisme, mais dialogue et complémentarité », discours d'ouverture du *Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres*, cité par Huchard (2010: 235).

[72] Ibidem, p.236.

source jaillissante qui ne tarit pas : un élément essentiel, parce que signifiant, de la Civilisation de l'Universel, qui s'élabore, sous nos yeux, par nous et pour nous, par tous et pour tous ».[73]

Le Président Senghor, André Malraux, Alioune Diop, Jacqueline Delange, Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Aimé Césaire, et tant d'autres grands intellectuels du monde, ont tous reconnu que cette exposition « a été une entreprise humaniste exaltante » (Huchard 2010: 287). L'histoire retiendra de cette exposition « comme un des grands défis muséographiques du XXe siècle » (Huchard 2010: 287). Elle fut l'évènement le plus important de ce Premier Festival mondial des Arts nègres, une exposition d'art nègre à laquelle auront participé des artistes venant d'Afrique, d'Europe et d'Amérique.

Exemples de quelques expositions individuelles

1.1 Marc Chagall : 18 mars-18 avril 1971

Chagall est un peintre, sculpteur, graveur et décorateur juif né en 1887 à Liozna, près de Vitebsk en Biélorussie. Naturalisé français en 1937, il est décédé en 1985 à Saint-Paul-de-Vence en France. Il fréquente l'École des Beaux-arts de Saint-Pétersbourg à partir de 1907, avant de découvrir Paris en 1911. Il y rencontre de nombreux artistes et est témoin du fauvisme finissant et du cubisme naissant. Avec la Première Guerre mondiale, il rentre en Russie et y séjourne jusqu'en 1922, date à laquelle il s'installe à Berlin. Il revient en France en 1923. Avec la Seconde Guerre mondiale et les menaces sur les communautés juives, il rejoint les États-Unis en 1941. L'année 1948, marque son retour définitif en France, mais aussi sa reconnaissance au niveau international : il organise plusieurs expositions rétrospectives dans plusieurs pays, produit des céramiques murales, des vitraux, des peintures, des mosaïques, des tapisseries. Il est associé au surréalisme et au néo-primitivisme. Il est l'un des artistes étrangers installés en France les plus connus du 20e siècle avec Picasso.

De célèbres expositions de Marc Chagall ont eu lieu à Paris et à Nice en 1970 avant celle de Dakar en 1971. À la question de savoir pourquoi exposer l'œuvre de Chagall à Dakar, Senghor donne deux raisons : d'abord par « la place qu'occupe le Sénégal dans le domaine culturel, qui a choisi d'être une Grèce noire » et surtout à cause, dit-il, de l'attention que lui porte Chagall, qui lui a fait visiter la plus grande exposition de son œuvre organisée au Grand Palais de Paris en 1969.

Chagall fait partie, pour Senghor, des plus grands peintres du XXe siècle. Cette exposition à Dakar est l'occasion pour le Président-promoteur-culturel, de montrer la signification que revêt son œuvre par rapport à l'art nègre. Ce fut une riche exposition : eaux-fortes, gravures sur bois, lithographies en couleurs, affiches, reproduction de dessin, d'une aquarelle, d'un vitrail, etc. Les spectateurs ont eu la chance de découvrir toute « l'essence du génie de Chagall » (Senghor 1997: 257). Il peut sembler paradoxal de parler « d'influence » ou de « convergence » entre Marc Chagall et l'art nègre quand on sait qu'« au temps de la révolution nègre » au début du 20e siècle à Paris, l'artiste n'a pas subi une influence de l'art africain : « Il n'en avait pas besoin », écrit Senghor, parce qu'il avait apporté de sa Russie natale et de son ascendance sémitique tout ce que « les Nègres livraient à l'art surintellectualisé de l'Occident européen » (Senghor 1997: 258).

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[73] Ibidem, p.237.

Il y a dans l'œuvre de Chagall, explique Senghor, quelque chose qui « ressemble au style de l'art nègre, qui, par-delà le cubisme, rejoint l'art nègre » (1977a: 259) : le trait, la géométrie, les courbes, les formes, tout converge vers l'art africain. Pour résumer, l'art de Chagall par rapport à l'art nègre, disons tout simplement que « c'est la même sensibilité » (Senghor 1977a: 259). Les tableaux de Chagall sont des « idées peintes », ou, et pour dire la même chose, des «idées-sentiments ». Son art est « un art *subjectif*, comme l'art nègre, sentimental » (Senghor 1977a: 258). Chagall n'exprime pas ses tristesses et ses joies en formes abstraites, mais en « images identifiables ». Les images qu'il produit « ne sont pas de simples imitations idéalisées de la nature, comme l'art traditionnel de l'Occident ; ce sont des images-symboles », où chaque forme et chaque couleur ont un sens. Avec Chagall, « l'anecdote dépasse l'anecdote. Comme dans l'art nègre, qui est, lui aussi, fait d'images analogiques, mais rythmées » (Senghor 1977a: 258). Comme dans l'art nègre, l'art de Chagall « schématise », « résume », « stylise » par une « *image-analogie* » ; il s'intéresse à l'image signifiant, à la sensation du signifié.

1.2 Pablo Picasso : 6 avril-6 mai 1972

Peintre, sculpteur, céramiste et graveur, Picasso né en 1881 à Malaga en Espagne et décédé en 1973 à Mougins en France, est incontestablement l'un des artistes les plus connus du XXe siècle. Il a grandi dans l'art : son père, conservateur de musée, enseignait aussi la peinture. C'est à 15 ans, en 1896, qu'il entre dans la célèbre école d'art et de design de Barcelone, où enseignait son père. Il représente l'Espagne à l'Exposition universelle de Paris en 1900, s'installe à Paris à partir de 1901 et rencontre l'art nègre. C'est à partir de 1907 que ses peintures et celles de son ami Georges Braque sont qualifiées de « cubistes ». Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, il s'éloigne peu à peu de ce style et commence à voyager en Europe. Entre 1925 et 1936, il se lie au mouvement surréaliste.

> « À Pablo Picasso
> Elle dort et repose sur la candeur du sable.
> Koumba Tam dort. Une palme verte voile la fièvre des cheveux, cuivre le front courbe.
> Les paupières closes, coupe double et sources scellées.
> Ce fin croissant, cette lèvre plus noire et lourde à peine – ou' le sourire de la femme complice ?
> Les patènes des joues, le dessin du menton chantent l'accord muet.
> Visage de masque fermé à l'éphémère, sans yeux sans matière.
> Tête de bronze parfaite et sa patine de temps.
> Que ne souillent fards ni rougeur ni rides, ni traces de larmes ni de baisers
> O visage tel que Dieu t'a créé avant la mémoire même des âges.
>
> Visage de l'aube du monde, ne t'ouvre pas comme un col tendre pour émouvoir ma chair.
> Je t'adore, ô Beauté, de mon œil monocorde ! » (Senghor 1956b).

Ce poème, « Masque nègre » de Senghor, extrait du recueil *Chants d'ombre*, écrit juste après la fin de la guerre en 1945, est un poème de 12 vers libres, adressé à Pablo Picasso. Senghor se rappelle de ses origines avec la description d'un visage d'une femme noire à l'apparence de masque.

C'est avec une exposition des œuvres de Picasso que le Musée Dynamique ouvre la saison de 1972. Cette année-là, le monde entier célébrait son quatre-vingt-dixième anniversaire et l'État du Sénégal a tenu à s'associer à l'évènement. Si Picasso est choisi, c'est que, d'une part, nous dit

Senghor, l'artiste est un modèle exemplaire pour la jeune École de Dakar. Il a eu un héritage culturel métisse très riche : andalou, méditerranéen, espagnol. Cette culture hybride lui a permis d'avoir une force créatrice « rarement égalée ». D'autre part, c'est parce qu'il était bien imprégné des valeurs de la négritude telles que l'enracinement et l'ouverture. Les liens artistiques entre Picasso et l'Afrique sont très forts. La période la plus importante de sa carrière est d'ailleurs souvent qualifiée de « période nègre ». Les visages des *Demoiselles d'Avignon (*1907) rappellent certains masques fangs et annoncent la plus grande révolution plastique du siècle : le cubisme. Picasso nous apprend d'ailleurs que ses plus grandes émotions artistiques, il les a ressenties lorsqu'il a vu, pour la première fois, les sculptures africaines[74].

L'exposition de Picasso du Musée Dynamique a eu lieu du 06 avril au 06 mai 1972. Le Catalogue nous apprend que l'exposition embrasse tous les genres artistiques travaillés par Picasso : 6 tableaux dont *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1960) inspiré du tableau de Manet, 16 dessins, 30 lithographies en couleurs, 21 gravures sur linoléum, 27 gravures en eau-forte, aquatintes et pointes-sèches, 35 gravures d'une série de 347, 7 pièces en céramiques éditées par les Ateliers Madoura à Vallauris en France, 2 tapisseries, 2 tapis, 43 affiches de ses expositions, 3 livres illustrés, 3 albums, 35 livres écrits sur l'artiste. Au total, c'est plus que 236 pièces qui ont été montrées au public dakarois. Du point du nombre d'œuvres exposées, c'est certainement l'une des plus grandes expositions de Picasso dans le monde.

À la question quel est le rapport entre Picasso et l'art nègre, Senghor répond : « Il reste qu'il a été le premier, avec ses *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, à rompre brutalement avec l'esthétique classique, voire à dépasser les emprunts sémantiques et syntaxiques faits à l'Art nègre pour aller au cœur des choses, je veux dire à changer moins de langage que de vision, voire de *réalité* » (1977a: 326).

Picasso fait ainsi non pas de l'art-imitation, mais de l'art-invention. Il ne représente pas la nature, mais il la reproduit en créant « une nature plus humaine » (Senghor 1977a: 326). Comme dans l'art nègre, l'art de Picasso n'est pas une « *copie d'un archétype répété mille fois* » (Senghor 1964a: 207) : il n'imite pas le réel, mais il tend à l'expression essentielle du réel. Il est ainsi à l'opposé du réalisme classique, celui qui fait de l'œuvre d'art une copie conforme du réel imité : « pour la première fois aux yeux d'un Européen, fut-il d'Andalousie, l'art tournait le dos à la raison discursive voire à l'esthétique grecque. Il n'était plus physeos mimésis (imitation de la nature), mais ad libitum, expression du surréel ou du sous-réel » (Senghor 1993, 130-131).

L'art de Picasso traduit des « idées-sentiments » ou, et pour dire exactement la même chose, des « sentiments-idées ». Et c'est par là que Picasso rencontre l'art africain. On insiste généralement sur le caractère rationnel des œuvres de Picasso et on soutient que l'artiste condamne la sentimentalité. Mais pour Senghor, « si Picasso a souvent récusé la sentimentalité, c'est dans ce qu'elle a de petit-bourgeois, d'excessif et de naïf en même temps» (Senghor 1977a: 327). Tout son travail est marqué, comme dans l'art africain, par le sentiment, l'émotion et la transe qui sous-tendent sa création. L'artiste ne cherche pas à ce que son œuvre nous plaise, mais nous émeuve. À la manière des Négro-africains, Picasso « se sert d'images analogiques, des formes-symboles, pour, à la fois, exprimer et signifier, sa vision intérieure » (Senghor 1977a: 329). Tout le travail artistique de Picasso a sa signification en Afrique : la forme, la couleur, l'image, la matière. On ne

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[74] Lire Picasso, cité par Apollinaire 1999.

peut oublier l'apport de l'Afrique au modernisme artistique avec son rôle joué dans le Cubisme et le Surréalisme. Pierre Daix écrira à ce propos du cubisme:

> Je ne veux pas dire que le cubisme soit fils de l'art africain, je veux dire que dans le courage intellectuel qu'il a fallu à Picasso et à Braque pour s'attaquer aux trucages et aux illusions de la peinture classique et de sa perspective considérée jusque-là comme rationnelle, il est entré pour beaucoup l'exemple de l'art africain, l'exemple d'une autre raison plastique, d'une autre expression rationnelle de la troisième dimension, expression fondée sur les signes, des transformations des données, sensibles en une véritable écriture plastique conceptuelle. C'est parce que Picasso a tout de suite compris l'art africain comme un art raisonnable qu'il a su en extraire cette raison-là (Daix 1975 : 16).

On ne dira jamais assez, le cubisme est un mouvement artistique d'inspiration nègre. Dans *Nations nègres et culture* (1954), Cheikh Anta Diop, dans sa réflexion sur l'art nègre, soulignait un « expressionnisme cubiste très prononcé » (1954: 524) en Côte d'Ivoire avec le style dan et au Congo avec le style basonge.

1.3 Pierre Soulages : 29 novembre-29 décembre 1974

Après Chagall et Picasso, ce fut le tour de Pierre Soulages au Musée Dynamique. Soulages est un peintre et graveur français né en 1919 à Rodez dans l'Aveyron. Il est particulièrement connu pour son usage de la couleur noire, qu'il appelle lui-même « noir-lumière » ou « outrenoir ». Artiste qui, du noir, fait jaillir ainsi la lumière, Soulages est une figure majeure de la peinture abstraite française. Il ne représente pas, dit-il, il présente. Il ne dépeint pas non plus, il peint. Il y a là des convergences avec l'art nègre.

Léopold Sédar Senghor dans un article consacré à Soulages écrit : « La première fois que je vis un tableau de Pierre Soulages, ce fut un choc. Je reçus, au creux de l'estomac, un coup qui me fit vaciller, comme le boxeur, touché, qui soudain s'abîme » (Senghor 1964: 232). S'il avait éprouvé un tel sentiment devant l'œuvre de l'artiste, c'est que, ajoute-t-il, il avait senti la même impression quand il a vu pour la première fois un masque dan.[75] Il trouve ainsi des similitudes entre la peinture de Soulages et les masques africains. Les tableaux de l'artiste lui rappellent, toujours, les sculptures et les peintures négro-africaines. Soulages a le sens des formes non géométriques : « comme les formes négro-africaines, elles ne sont tracées ni à la règle, ni à l'écriture, ni au compas : elles sont libres, comme mal léchées, avec des empâtements et des glacis, des protubérances et des creux » (Senghor 1964: 233). Comme dans l'art nègre, les peintures de Soulage n'imitent pas le réel. Elles ne reproduisent pas un paysage, un visage ou une scène, mais tendent plutôt à leur expression essentielle, à décrire plastiquement une vision intérieure. Plus exactement, il a inventé un langage qui lui est propre. Il n'emprunte pas des formes à la nature, puisqu'il veut exprimer autre chose qu'on ne retrouve pas dans la nature. Il tourne ainsi le dos à la nature pour faire surgir de nouvelles images. Il y a ainsi chez Soulages, l'idée d'un « sentiment-peinture », ou, et pour dire la même chose, « une idée-peinture » (Senghor 1964: 233) – Manessier procède aussi de cette manière. Nous y reviendrons. Si Senghor a choisi donc d'exposer les œuvres de Soulages, c'est qu'elles ont le style des écritures plastiques négro-africaines. Il retrouve dans

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[75] Un peuple d'Afrique de l'Ouest vivant principalement au centre-ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire. On le retrouve aussi au Libéria et en Guinée.

les peintures de Soulages « l'idéogramme de l'Homme en signe de croix, qui abonde dans l'art négro-africain » (Senghor 1964: 234).

Ses œuvres ont été exposées au Musée Dynamique du 29 novembre-29 décembre 1974. Si Senghor a voulu exposer les œuvres de Soulages à Dakar, c'est qu'il était très frappé par la force rythmique « qui l'apparentait, paradoxalement, et à l'art nègre, et à l'art méditerranéen » (Senghor 1977a: 554). Soulages a tourné le dos à l'art comme « imitation de la nature ». Ses œuvres, à partir de 1968, ont des « formes pures, plus rythmées » (1977a: 556) qui font penser, à Senghor, « *à la grande statuaire soudano-sahélienne*, à l'art bambara, dogon ou sénoufo » (Senghor 1977a: 556). Les formes que crée Soulages sont des métaphores, c'est-à-dire des images analogiques, comme dans l'art nègre. On a souvent pensé, et à tort, que par son « « refus de la description » et de la « sentimentalité » » (1977a: 558), « qu'il n'y avait, chez lui [Soulages], ni symbolisme, ni sentiment, ni émotion » (1977a: 558), « mais il ne faut trop y croire », affirme Senghor. Car « il y a une énigme de Soulages », « sa peinture donne un choc : un coup, non au cœur ni à la tête, mais au ventre ». Ce qu'exprime Soulages dans sa peinture, ce n'est pas une idée-sentiment, mais une émotion:

> « Quand donc le peintre est devant sa toile et qu'il commence de peindre, c'est sous le coup d'une émotion ou, plus exactement, du souvenir d'une émotion, qui vient, pour parler comme Soulages, d'«impulsion intérieure, un désir de certaines formes, couleurs, matières » » (Senghor 1977a: 559).

L'émotion s'exprime chez le peintre par des matières, des formes rythmées et colorées. Et Soulages « s'est forgé une personnalité picturale, qui se caractérise par l'équilibre dans la tension de l'émotion » (Senghor 1977a: 559). La peinture de Soulages *signifie* et exprime une rare puissance d'émotion : « Et c'est pour exprimer cet ineffable phénomène humain que Soulages a créé un nouveau monde par un art nouveau. Et que cet art soit frère de l'art négro-africain, non par imitation mais par nature, nous ne serons pas les derniers à nous en réjouir » (Senghor 1977a: 560).

Comme dans l'art africain, l'émotion est aussi au fondement de la création chez Soulages. La création suscite toujours chez lui une grande émotion.

1.4 Alfred Manessier : 28 mai-27 juin 1976

« Après l'inventeur Picasso, le coloriste-poète Chagall, et le créateur de formes Soulages, le Musée Dynamique reçoit Alfred Manessier, témoin de la spiritualité ».[76] Il rejoint ainsi Teilhard de Chardin « dans sa quête d'un maintien égal entre l'univers divin et l'univers naturel et de la place de l'homme dans l'un et l'autre ». [77] Son œuvre fascine parce qu'elle communique avec le divin. Bosio ajoute plus loin que : « Beauté de la nature, souffrance humaine, grandeur mystique, religieuses, telle est la trilogie ascendante, peu commune, de l'œuvre de Manessier ». [78]

Né en 1911 à Saint-Ouen dans la Somme en France et mort en 1993 à Orléans, Alfred Manessier est l'auteur de beaucoup de tapisseries, peintures et vitraux dans les lieux de culte. Senghor le

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[76] Gérard Bosio dans Musée Dynamique 1976.

[77] *Ibidem.*

[78] *Ibidem.*

considère comme « comme l'un des plus des grands peintres » du XXe siècle (Senghor 1976: 66). Comme Picasso et les Cubistes, il a eu aussi sa période nègre. Il a appris d'eux la valeur des formes et de leurs rythmes.[79] Il a acquis le sens des tons et des nuances. Parlant du style de l'artiste, Senghor (1976: 65) écrit : « la couleur est, chez Manessier, ce qu'est la mélodie chez le musicien. Le peintre l'a, lui-même, souvent suggéré, en comparant son art à la musique. Et elle envahit, recouvre, colore le noir pour lui donner un sentiment : un sens ».[80] Comme l'art nègre, les créations de Manessier tendent à l'abstraction. Il n'imite pas la nature, mais s'inspire d'elle, de ses formes et symboliques rythmées, de ses couleurs.

L'œuvre de Manessier n'est donc pas étrangère à l'Afrique. Elle véhicule un message universel. Elle est comme ce choc qui nous ébranle dans le rythme du tam-tam cérémonial africain. Ses œuvres exposées au Musée Dynamique du 28 mai au 27 juin 1976 témoignent de la diversité et de la profondeur de son art : 24 tableaux de peintures dont « Hommage à Martin Luther King (1968), « Vietnam-Vietnam (1972), des peintures religieuses telles « Recueillement nocturne II » et « Les Cloches» et 12 aquarelles dont les « Lumières crépuscules » (1973), 9 maquettes de vitraux de l'Église N.D. de la Prévôté à Moutier en Suisse, 1 tapisserie intitulée « La joie » et plusieurs illustrations de livres.

Cette exposition a ainsi présenté un panorama important de l'œuvre de Manessier. Le visiteur est heureux de découvrir des disciplines, des techniques et des thèmes très différents. Pour reprendre Bosio, dans le Catalogue de l'exposition, sa peinture, « n'est pas une fin », mais « un message ». Son art est profond et universel en ce sens qu'il s'adresse à tous les hommes. Il exprime la transfiguration plastique du spirituel, la puissance du signe et de la couleur. Son message universel l'invite à rencontrer l'art nègre. Les artistes négro- africains, on le sait, ont toujours été fascinés par le sacré. Cette exposition de Manessier à Dakar témoigne du dialogue des cultures.

La peinture de Manessier est une « expression analogique » et « dramatique » entre le « spirituel et le matériel », « le monde intérieur et le monde extérieur, spirituel et matériel » (Senghor 1976: 60). Il avait, dit Senghor, dans son allocution lors du vernissage de l'exposition du peintre, une imagination féconde et « une habileté de ses mains à arranger, recréer les formes et les couleurs » (Senghor 1976: 60) : « Je commence à peindre quand je ressens une coïncidence très étroite entre le spectacle que j'ai sous les yeux et un état intérieur. Cette correspondance déclenche une joie créatrice, que j'ai envie et besoin d'exprimer » (Senghor 1976: 62).[81]

3.5 Iba Ndiaye en 1977[82]

Si Senghor a choisi d'exposer les œuvres d'Iba Ndiaye, après celles des artistes européens, parce que son œuvre témoigne, dit-il, « de la vivacité » de la culture sénégalaise (Senghor 1977b: 2). Père de l'art sénégalais contemporain, Iba Ndiaye a commencé sa carrière dans les années

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[79] « Givre I », « Paysage esquimau » et « le Grand Nord », des tableaux qui figurent dans l'exposition, témoignent de sa période cubiste.

[80] Discours de Senghor lors du vernissage de l'exposition (Senghor 1976).

[81] Senghor cite ici les propos de Manessier rapportés par Bourniquel. Allocution prononcée le 28 mai 1976 à l'occasion du vernissage de l'exposition du peintre.

[82] Je reprends ici une partie de mes articles déjà publié (Diop 2008a, b).

cinquante, après avoir étudié à l'École d'Architecture de Montpellier puis à l'École nationale des Beaux-arts à Paris. Il expose à Dakar en 1966 au salon d'art contemporain du 1er Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres. Son exposition au Musée Dynamique a lieu en février 1977. Parmi ses œuvres exposées, « des images rythmiques, mélodiques » (Senghor 1977b: 2), comme les scènes de marché, les scènes de Tabaski avec le mouton égorgé, le Jazz, des paysages de la Casamance et du Sahel. Il transcende ainsi la tradition « pour atteindre un langage universel » (Senghor 1977b: 2).

Iba Ndiaye a pu exprimer l'Afrique à travers des techniques picturales européennes telles que le fondu de ses huiles et les lavis. André Guillabert, dans le catalogue de l'exposition se demande si les œuvres présentées « ne nous permettent-elles pas d'écrire qu'avec Iba Ndiaye l'avenir est déjà le présent ».[83] La célèbre série d'huiles sur toile, peinte sur le thème de la Tabaski (le sacrifice rituel du mouton), est l'une des plus connues. Ces peintures sont, en effet, d'une rare intensité ; elles expriment le sang, la douleur, la souffrance et sont très convoitées par les plus grands musées du monde. « Peindre est se souvenir » aimait à dire Iba Ndiaye. Le rituel du mouton lui rappelle son enfance au Sénégal ; il le peint en tant que témoin « de ce qui s'implique de magie dans un tel sacrifice » (Ndiaye 1994: 38). Au Sénégal où la population est en majorité musulmane, c'est la plus grande fête religieuse du pays. C'est cette atmosphère qu'Iba Ndiaye décrit dans ses toiles intitulées *Tabaski*. Les images de prière et de fête sont pourtant plus fortes à cette occasion, mais Iba Ndiaye a choisi de peindre l'image sanglante du sacrifice.

Dans *La ronde à qui le tour ?* (1970), on voit un mouton égorgé et d'autres qui défilent autour dans un environnement ensanglanté se demandant à quand leur tour. L'artiste s'interroge ici sur la mort qui attend ces moutons mais nous interpelle tous, en tant qu'humains, sur nos comportements. Il le dit sans équivoque : « Les éléments plastiques que sont la couleur du sang, le sol craquelé des latérites africaines, la ronde sacrificielle me sont apparus comme des traductions possibles de l'oppression d'un peuple sur un autre ou d'un individu sur un autre » (Ndiaye 1994: 56).

L'oppression dont il parle, c'est d'abord l'esclavage, ensuite la colonisation mais aussi le néo-colonialisme, l'exploitation des ressources africaines, la triste situation dans laquelle l'Afrique est plongée avec ses guerres civiles et ethniques. Ses toiles sur le sacrifice du mouton portent le sang de son univers. Tous ceux qui se conduisent comme des moutons finiront par être « égorgés comme des moutons ». Iba Ndiaye refuse ainsi la paresse, la médiocrité et l'assistance. Pour lui, tout peuple doit avoir « une conscience de révolte » car « la carence d'une conscience de révolte amène toujours à être le mouton de quelqu'un d'autre » (Ndiaye 1994: 58).

La couleur rouge et les squelettes expriment toute sa sensibilité à l'événement. Ces tableaux témoignent de la vie, des êtres, des choses, de la mort, de l'au-delà. Ils parlent de rituels, de vie quotidienne, de coutumes et de mythes. L'artiste peint avec force un langage plastique et des thématiques qui correspondent à ses pulsions. Ses tableaux donnent l'impression du déjà vécu : sa peinture, dit-il, est une « nécessité intérieure » qui lui permet d'exprimer ses sentiments. Son art est un art engagé, un art de « combat » ; en ce sens qu'il prend position sur « les problèmes existentiels » (Ndiaye 1994: 45).

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[83] Musée Dynamique 1977.

Son espace pictural est en complicité avec son inspiration. Il a un regard particulier sur sa tradition, ses émotions, les problèmes de l'Afrique qu'il veut restituer et faire connaître au monde entier. Il utilise la peinture pour combattre l'injustice. Le mouton représente « le symbole de toutes les victimes » (Ndiaye 1994: 43). À travers ces peintures où le « muscle saigne », il évoque la souffrance. Ces variations sont aussi « à interpréter comme des métaphores de la liaison spirituelle avec les ancêtres... » (Ndiaye 1994: 43). Ces images rituelles, peintes avec « des couleurs consciemment dissonantes », nous font revivre l'événement de la Tabaski. Pour reprendre une expression de Senghor (du catalogue du Musée Dynamique 1977 avec Iba Ndiaye), « la tradition est transcendée pour atteindre un langage universel ».

Iba Ndiaye peint les problèmes majeurs de l'Afrique. Pour comprendre ces tableaux, il faut aller au-delà de l'image religieuse pour lire le destin du continent si les Africains ne prennent pas en main les choses dès maintenant. S'ils ne le font pas, l'Afrique sera comme ces moutons égorgés qui baignent dans le sang—si elle ne l'est pas déjà avec toutes les guerres et la pauvreté qui secouent le continent. Il combat ainsi la passivité et affirme, à travers ses toiles, que les initiatives, pour l'Afrique, ne doivent pas venir des Occidentaux mais plutôt des Africains eux-mêmes. Il n'y a pas de développement hors de l'effort collectif.

La politique muséale de Senghor

Senghor est connu pour être un homme d'art et de culture. Pendant ses vingt années d'exercice au pouvoir, il a conçu, développé, promu et appliqué une politique culturelle fondée sur l'idéologie de la négritude : la défense et la valorisation des valeurs de civilisations négro-africaines. Président de la République, il accordait une place privilégiée aux arts plastiques dans sa politique de développement de la nation[84] ; « d'où la priorité accordée, dès l'aube de l'indépendance, à la formation de l'homme, aux arts et aux lettres » (Sylla 2006 : 87). Grâce à lui, le Sénégal s'est fait remarquer dans les arts plastiques : les Manufactures sénégalaises des Arts décoratifs de Thiès créées en 1964, création de l'École des Beaux-arts en 1966, le Service des Archives culturelles en 1967, création du Musée Dynamique en 1966 et le premier Festival mondial des Arts nègres la même année, le Musée régional de Thiès créé en 1975, le Commissariat aux expositions d'art sénégalais à l'étranger créé en 1977. Senghor a ainsi mis en place une scène artistique à part entière, avec des structures administratives et des institutions de recherches et de financement de l'action culturelle, des écoles de formation artistique, des manifestations artistiques, des galeries et des marchands, etc.[85].

Senghor fera de la négritude le critère de mécénat de l'État durant tout son mandat. Les artistes devaient situer leurs créations conformément à ce que l'on a appelé « L'École de Dakar », basée sur les fondements de la négritude[86], pour espérer obtenir des bourses de formation ou avoir des commandes de l'État[87]. Il avait ainsi ses goûts artistiques pour éduquer le peuple et réformer les arts

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[84] Sur le mécénat d'art de Senghor, je renvoie les lecteurs aux ouvrages suivants : Sylla 1998 et 2006.

[85] Voir les deux ouvrages d'Abdou Sylla déjà cités; lire à ce propos Harney : 2004.

[86] L'esthétique senghorienne est fondée sur les bases de la négritude : enracinement et ouverture, raison intuitive, ontologie des rythmes, force vitale, le parallélisme asymétrique. Lire à ce propos Diop 2018 et Diagne 2007.

[87] Voir Harney 2004.

au Sénégal. C'est dans ce sens qu'il faut comprendre la création du Musée Dynamique « où les arts plastiques occupaient une place de choix » avec l'invitation, chaque année d'un « artiste de qualité internationale » (Senghor 1977b, 324). L'espace d'exposition est constitué de deux grandes salles. La première avec environ 850m² accueille les expositions temporaires, la deuxième, une mezzanine de 490 m² accueille les collections permanentes du musée.

La question de la fin des activités du Musée Dynamique nous appelle à replacer le projet dans le contexte de son époque. C'est Senghor lui-même qui ferme le musée pour la première fois en 1977, pour y installer la compagnie de danse Mudra-Afrique dirigée par Maurice Béjart (fils du philosophe franco-sénégalais Gaston Berger) et Germaine Acogny. Abdou Diouf le ferme à nouveau en 1990, après l'avoir rouvert en 1982, pour y installer la Cour de cassation. À sa réouverture en 1982 et jusqu'à sa fermeture définitive en 1990, il a aussi accueilli des expositions mémorables parmi lesquelles : le premier salon national des artistes (1985), le deuxième salon des artistes plasticiens sénégalais (1986), les « Arts vivants du Zaïre » (1986), « Alpha Waly Diallo : un peintre face à son histoire» (1986), « Jacob Yacouba, œuvres récentes » (1987), «Rencontre plastique germano-sénégalaise (1987), « Luigi Pastori », un peintre italien (1987), «Les tapisseries de Gracia Cutuli d'Argentine (1987), « El Hadji Sy, œuvres récentes » (1987).

Sur la réception de ces expositions par les Sénégalais en général, certains témoins que j'ai interviewés comme Raphaël Ndiaye, actuel directeur de la Fondation Léopold Sédar Senghor, pensent qu'elles étaient bien suivies par la population, alors que pour d'autres comme Alioune Badiane ou Penda Mbow, l'engouement des Sénégalais en général était très limité. Dans un entretien du 02 janvier 2022, Ndiaye décrit : « J'ai régulièrement visité ces expositions au Musée Dynamique. C'étaient de grandes manifestations bien suivies car la culture était la ligne directrice de la politique de Senghor ». Mais pour le critique d'art sénégalais Alioune Badiane, qui a connu cette époque, dans un entretien du 1er janvier 2022 objecte : « L'intérêt de ces expositions était limité à l'élite, aux amis de Senghor, à l'assistance et aux artistes qui allaient alimenter les expositions. Ces projets étaient très distants de la population. Le grand public n'était pas très enthousiaste ». Penda Mbow renchérit dans l'interview du vendredi 07 janvier 2022 : « Les élèves de Dakar que nous étions avaient beaucoup de chance, car ils étaient initiés très jeunes à l'esthétique négro-africaine. L'élite sénégalaise accordait une grande place à la culture, aux Arts et aux Lettres puisque Senghor les plaçait au cœur de son action. Mais le reste des Sénégalais, sans comprendre véritablement le sens de ces expositions, étaient habitués à entendre certains noms à travers les discours de Senghor et les accueils réservés à ces personnalités ».

C'est dans ce sens qu'il faut comprendre la création du laboratoire Agit'Art, un collectif d'artistes fondé à Dakar aux débuts des années 1970 pour revitaliser la création artistique et remettre en cause la philosophie senghorienne de la négritude. Parmi les membres de ce mouvement, on peut citer : Issa Samb Joe Ouakam (artiste interdisciplinaire), El Sy (plasticien), Bouna Médoune Sèye (photographe), Djibril Diop Mamebety (cinéaste). Contre la fonctionnarisation et l'institutionnalisation de l'art, ils se rebellent contre la politique culturelle de Senghor et prennent leur distance par rapport à la négritude et à l'École de Dakar. Issa Samb Joe Ouakam, lors de l'exposition de l'art contemporain sénégalais au Grand Palais à Paris en 1974, brûle ses œuvres qui devaient figurer dans l'exposition.

Mais au fond, *l'homo senegalensis* que Senghor voulait façonner avait-il les moyens de faire de l'art et de la culture des valeurs essentielles ? Le programme de politique culturelle et artistique de

Senghor était confronté à d'autres problématiques sociales et économiques qui préoccupaient plus les Sénégalais. Sa politique culturelle était qualifiée par ses opposants « d'extravertie » et « d'élitiste » (Penda Mbow). Il était accusé d'utiliser les deniers publics pour organiser des événements culturels au lieu de résoudre les problèmes socio-économiques auxquels le pays était confronté. C'est peut-être dans ce contexte qu'il faut situer et comprendre la fermeture du Musée Dynamique. Aujourd'hui, on serait tenté de dire qu'il ne reste pas grand-chose de ces expositions prestigieuses. La Cour de cassation est toujours logée au Musée Dynamique et sa restitution à la culture n'est pas à l'ordre du jour de l'État sénégalais. Cet hébergement qui était au début temporaire est devenu une permanence.

Mais pour Senghor, l'indépendance politique et économique ne peut se faire sans une indépendance culturelle. Ainsi, il était convaincu que la résolution des problèmes économiques et politiques passe d'abord par la résolution des problèmes culturels. Culture et politique sont ainsi à l'origine de tout développement réussi. Car le développement de l'Afrique, selon lui, ne peut se faire sans le développement de la culture. C'est à travers la culture qu'il comptait amorcer la renaissance africaine. Voilà pourquoi, il lui accordait une importance telle que l'on pense que s'il a fait de la politique, c'est pour réaliser ses projets culturels. Et c'est pour mettre en valeur cette culture africaine qu'il s'est lancé dans de grands projets culturels tels que le festival mondial des arts nègres et les grandes expositions au Musée Dynamique.

L'histoire retiendra que le Musée Dynamique de Dakar fut l'un des rares musées d'Afrique – sinon le seul – a voir exposé, au XXe siècle, des artistes aussi célèbres que Léonard de Vinci, Kandinsky, Miró, Marc Chagall, Picasso, Hundertwasser, Soulages, Alfred Manessier, Olivier Debré, Iba Ndiaye. Elle retiendra aussi que l'exposition « Art Nègre » du Premier festival des arts nègres est l'une des plus grandes expositions de l'histoire de la muséologie.

C'est que, en créant le Musée Dynamique, Senghor voulait « placer le Sénégal au niveau le plus élevé de ce Dialogue, mais aussi situer les objectifs et les défis à relever, en donnant à l'institution une dimension internationale » (Huchard 2010: 355). Le musée était un outil important privilégié pour le dialogue des cultures. Il écrit à ce propos :

> « Si Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso, Pierre Soulages, Alfred Manessier et d'autres grands artistes ont déjà franchi les murs du Musée dynamique, consacré à l'Art, sans frontières, c'est qu'ils ont, eux aussi, vécu et exprimé ce que nous chantons dans la sérénité : la rencontre des valeurs culturelles des différentes ethnies et nations au niveau de l'Universel » (Senghor 1977b: 22).

Le vœu de Senghor était d'organiser, chaque année, une exposition avec un artiste de qualité internationale. C'était l'âge d'or des arts plastiques sénégalais. Aujourd'hui, c'est triste de voir que l'État n'est plus investisseur des arts au Sénégal. Il n'y a plus malheureusement d'expositions individuelles d'envergure comme celles organisées au Musée Dynamique lorsque Senghor était à la tête de l'État du Sénégal. Depuis 1990, les locaux du Musée sont affectés à la Cour suprême. En 1996, après de nombreuses critiques, le chef de l'Etat, Abdou Diouf, avait annoncé officiellement qu'il allait redonner les locaux au ministère chargé de la Culture. Le Président Abdoulaye Wade durant ses deux mandats n'en a jamais parlé. L'espoir est porté sur l'actuel Président Macky Sall. Le monde de l'art attend toujours la restitution de ce lieu historique de la culture qui est « le témoignage le plus signifiant » (Senghor 1977b: 64) du premier festival mondial des arts nègres.

Restitution du patrimoine africain et décolonisation des musées

La politique muséale africaine doit être pensée en termes de bifurcations. Aujourd'hui, il est temps de quitter le mimétisme occidental et de choisir une direction proprement africaine. Nous ne pouvons pas envisager le musée africain moderne à partir de la colonisation. C'est avec une éducation muséale construite sur la base de récits africains qu'il sera possible de décoloniser la muséologie en Afrique. Il faut rompre avec l'idéologie occidentale d'une muséologie unique, commune ou universelle. Il s'agit de déconstruire radicalement « l'approche occidentale des musées », en allant au-delà des notions de « musée » et de « collection » héritées de l'Occident (Van Geert 2021: 216). L'institution muséale telle que nous la connaissons aujourd'hui est en effet introduite en Afrique durant la période coloniale. Les premiers musées ouest africains, par exemple, sont créés sous l'investigation de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) – dont le siège était à Dakar et des centres régionaux à Abidjan, Bamako, Cotonou, Niamey et Ouagadougou. Leur création permettait aux colons d'étudier les communautés pour mieux les dominer et exploiter leurs ressources. Il est bien possible de collecter et d'exposer des objets ou des tableaux d'art à partir d'un point de vue africain ; c'est-à-dire en se basant sur des critères des communautés africaines « d'exposer et de concevoir les collections, en se détachant explicitement de l'idée occidentale de musée » (Van Geert 2021: 217).

Avec la muséologie décoloniale, il ne s'agit plus d'étudier les communautés africaines, mais, de déconstruire l'idée coloniale et occidentale des musées, de « renverser la manière de faire « musée », d'acquérir et d'exposer des collections, de s'adresser aux publics » (Van Geert 2021: 216). Il s'agit, pour les Africains, de décider eux-mêmes de comment ils veulent représenter un musée et ses collections. Et puisque les notions même de musée et de collection sont introduites par l'expansion coloniale, il s'agit, de les redéfinir et de repenser les pratiques muséales en Afrique, à partir du point de vue des Africains. C'est de cette manière seulement que les musées africains pourront se décoloniser des pratiques occidentales.

Mais ce processus décolonial passe d'abord et avant tout par le rapatriement ou la restitution du patrimoine artistique et culturel africains dans les galeries et musées occidentaux. Aujourd'hui, la question de la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain conservé dans les musées du monde occidental devrait inciter l'État sénégalais à repenser sa politique muséographique pour pouvoir accueillir les objets restitués et les intégrer dans une nouvelle configuration des esthétiques négro-africaines. Même si Senghor n'avait pas envisagé cette question de la restitution, il avait bien réfléchi sur la circulation des objets. Pour faire découvrir au monde entier les créations de « l'École de Dakar », il avait fait initier une exposition itinérante d'art contemporain sénégalais à l'étranger. La première édition avait eu lieu à Dakar en 1974. L'exposition avait ensuite fait vingt-cinq villes dans quatorze pays : France, Finlande, Autriche, Italie, Suède, Norvège, Mexique, États-Unis, Canada, Brésil, Japon, Corée du Nord, Corée du Sud et Chine. Elle est rentrée à Dakar en 1985. L'État du Sénégal avait aussi contribué plusieurs fois à la participation des artistes sénégalais à des manifestations artistiques à l'étranger. Senghor n'était-il pas trop en avance sur son temps ?

Cette possibilité de circulation et d'échange permet de restituer non seulement les objets, mais aussi les traductions – pour reprendre une notion chère à Souleymane Bachir Diagne – et l'esthétique qu'ils portent. Car ces objets n'ont pas été seulement déplacés de l'Afrique à l'Occident, ils ont été aussi transplantés. Partis avec leur propre langue, ils vont retourner dans

leur terre d'origine avec des langues d'autres cultures. Leur transfert dans les galeries et musées occidentaux fut ainsi « transplantation », « traduction » et « translation » (Diagne 2022: 86). Dans ces lieux, ils ne sont pas restés figés, comme on a l'habitude de le penser, ils sont « force de vie et de transformation » (Diagne 2022: 87) ; car ils sont la preuve de contextes, de lieux et de temps différents, ils acquièrent de nouvelles significations et parlent une langue d'emprunt.

Ce sont ces objets d'art africain qui vont être rapatriés ou restitués que S. Bachir Diagne attribue le nom de « Mutant » – de « mutation », « transmutation ». Exposés dans les musées occidentaux, ces objets « sont chargés de significations nouvelles et les restituer signifie de les déraciner à nouveau ». Ils ont finalement, comme des rhizomes, « poussé des racines ailleurs et ils appartiennent à plusieurs terres » (Diagne 2022). À leur retour dans leurs pays d'origine, ils devraient donc habiter dans un lieu, dit « dynamique ». C'est ce que Diagne appelle « le Musée des mutants », et c'est exactement l'idée de Senghor derrière la notion d'un « Musée dynamique » : exposer dans ce lieu des œuvres qui expriment une certaine puissance, une certaine force de vie. « Dynamis » en grec signifie la puissance, une certaine force. Par conséquent, les objets et les tableaux d'art qui sont exposés au Musée Dynamique sont des objets mutants, migrants, migratoires. Senghor avait ainsi une vision très dynamique de l'art africain.

Diagne, reprenant Joshua Cohen (2020), préconise de suivre la trace des objets d'art africains « jusqu'à leur traduction dans le langage d'œuvres modernes » (Diagne 2022: 92). On raconte souvent que Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, André Derain, Georges Braque, Modigliani, Maurice de Vlaminck, etc., ont découvert dans les objets d'origine africaine leurs propres préoccupations et recherches esthétiques. Et l'on peut lire dans *l'Histoire Universelle* que « chaque artiste, peintre, sculpteur, poète ou musicien, prend conscience qu'il doit créer son mode d'expression, son langage, pour livrer sa vision du monde. Cet état d'esprit explique l'influence exercée alors par l'art nègre » (Grousset et Léonard 1958 : 98). Ils ont tous été influencés par le signe plastique négro-africain. De cette influence, naîtra le cubisme, le surréalisme, le futurisme et le dadaïsme (Diop 2018). Mais comment un masque Fang a-t-il trouvé traduction dans *Les baigneuses* de Vlaminck, *La Danse* de Derain ou *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* de Picasso ? Ou comment un masque Kru de la Cote d'Ivoire a-t-il trouvé traduction dans *La guitare* de Picasso ? Comment ces artistes ont-ils été des traducteurs des arts africains ?

Répondant à ces questions, Diagne donne l'exemple de Derain qui s'est « mis avec respect à la *tache de traducteur* des arts d'Afrique » (Diagne 2022: 95) en s'exerçant lors d'une visite au British Museum de Londres, « à faire des croquis d'œuvres « primitives », d'Océanie tout particulièrement. Le travail a consisté à faire ainsi courir sa main munie d'un crayon comme pour s'incorporer par elle le langage visuel des objets » (Diagne 2022: 95). On en sait beaucoup aussi sur les achats de masques africains de Picasso, Matisse, Klee ou Miro et leurs visites de musées ou de galeries pour contempler les objets d'art africain. En 1906, Matisse achète une statuette Vili du Congo chez un antiquaire. Il est attiré par les volumes et les déformations anatomiques. Un an plus tard, il représentera cette statuette dans son tableau *Nature morte à la statuette Nègre*, peint en 1907.

Ces artistes-traducteurs ont-ils bien traduits le sens de ces objets ? Reprenant Amadou Mahtar Mbow et Paul Ricœur, Diagne pense que « s'ils ont trahi, c'est [...], pour avoir traduit» (Diagne 2022: 102), nous rappelant le célèbre adage italien « traduttore, traditore », « traduire, c'est trahir ». Les lobbies anti-restitution soutiennent en général que même restitués en Afrique, ces objets

continueront à parler leur langue d'emprunt. Ceux qui avaient des fonctions bien précises avant leur départ auront perdu leur sens originel à leur retour puisque la plupart des conditions sociologiques qui prédisposaient à leur création et de leur utilisation n'existant plus, ce serait absurde de leur donner les mêmes significations comme s'ils n'avaient jamais été jamais décontextualisés.

Aujourd'hui, à part quelques communautés qui réclament leurs objets, la plupart de ces objets sont réclamés par les États. Une fois restitués, ils seront donc dans les musées comme ils le sont actuellement en Occident, et non pour reprendre leur fonction d'origine. Ils parleront ainsi une langue que les Africains devront traduire car « la translation du retour n'annule pas celle de départ, elle s'y ajoute » (Diagne 2022: 104).

6 Conclusion

Créé pour les besoins du Premier festival des arts nègres, le Musée Dynamique a été pendant une décennie, de 1966 à 1977, une vitrine de l'art moderne avec des expositions clefs de grands artistes qui ont marqué le 20e siècle, et de l'art contemporain sénégalais avec l'organisation des salons nationaux des artistes plasticiens sénégalais. Une histoire tumultueuse et passionnante. Comme dans beaucoup de musées africains, ces différentes expositions du Musée Dynamique ont été élaborées dans un contexte de l'héritage de la muséologie occidentale. Aujourd'hui, et avec la question très actuelle de la restitution du patrimoine africain, l'avenir des musées d'Afrique passe par de nouveaux modèles de muséologie proprement africains.

En Afrique de l'Ouest, à quelques exceptions près, les musées, dont la plupart sont issus de musées coloniaux, ont du mal à drainer les populations. Il y a très peu de visiteurs, hormis les sorties pédagogiques et les touristes. Il est grand temps de tuer « le modèle occidental de musée en Afrique pour que s'épanouissent de nouveaux modes de conservation et de promotion du patrimoine » (Konaré 1992). Réinventer ou redéfinir les musées africains revient à les inscrire dans un imaginaire africain. C'est le sens du Musée des Civilisations Noires de Dakar (MCN) inauguré le 06 décembre 2018, une idée de Senghor qui remonte au Festival mondial des arts nègres de 1966.

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