EDITORIAL

Social movement struggles in Africa

This special issue of the *Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE)* arose from a conference held in Paris in January 2010, organised by three of the issue's co-editors: Richard Banégas, Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Johanna Siméant. The conference on 'Struggles in Africa' (*Lutter dans les Afriques*) examined the nature of popular struggles in Africa's present and recent history, both through individual case studies and more comparative analysis of popular and social movements and their relationship to the wider context of political, economic and social change on the continent. As well as offering new insights into issues which are clearly of concern to the *ROAPE* readership, much of the research focused on countries, primarily in francophone Africa, that receive limited coverage in the journal. For these reasons, this special issue brings much of this rich body of empirical research and analysis of African struggles and movements to the attention of an English-speaking audience for this first time, demonstrating the diversity and significant impact of such struggles within a continent whose peoples are stereotypically depicted as relatively passive, compliant and even complicit in their own suffering and exploitation. The movements under study have developed original analyses of the changing context in which they operate, utilised new (as well as old) methods of activism and organisation, and articulated original perspectives on the problems faced by them, their constituents, their countries and their continent.

As well as the intrinsic value of these studies, the authors and editors of this special issue also present an original perspective on African political economy, distinct in some respects from *ROAPE*'s established approach. The emphasis is on 'bottom-up' analyses, reflecting and representing the voices of Africans engaged in day-to-day struggles that arise from structural manifestations of political and economic inequality and exploitation that are usually analysed in the journal in a larger-scale, theoretical or conceptually oriented way. In doing so, the editors seek to explore instructive encounters and potential disjuncture between the ways in which radical intellectual analysts on the one hand, and social movement activists on the other, understand and seek to address the particular (and evidently problematic) integration of Africa and its peoples into the global political system and its capitalist economy. This introduction, together with the article by Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle which immediately follows it, draws out some of these wider themes in ways which, it is hoped, will contextualise the articles that focus more on case studies.

Social movement approaches to African society

The social movements research presented at the Paris conference and within this issue utilises a range of intellectual approaches – political economy, but also Thompsonian 'history from below', more voluntarist interpretations of Marxism, subaltern studies, post-colonialism and others – to analyse the role played by popular movements of

various kinds in seeking to bring about progressive political and social change. The emphasis is given to African agency in challenging, complex and changing circumstances; underlying structural political and economic forces provide a vital materialist context and restraint to the activities of the movements analysed, but do not provide an easily readable roadmap to the unpredictable trajectories followed by social movements. The overt or official positions and composition of such movements may not be accurate guides to their empirical position in society or their relationship to wider social forces. Social movements are not, it is suggested, best understood as authentic and unproblematic movements of the people, simply counterposed to powerful and exploitative forces in society. They are rather an expression of the contradictions and hierarchies of the society in which they operate, whose debates and conflicts express inequalities of resources, influence and education and differences of class, gender and ethnicity, amongst others. This does not make them 'inauthentic' representatives of the poor or exploited; rather, it makes them venues or spaces in which political difference is articulated in societies characterised by inequality, exploitation and social conflict. For these reasons, social movements are best studied (as they are in the articles in this issue) *in situ* and in depth, utilising the techniques of social anthropology alongside those of political science.

Understanding African political struggles via a social movement analysis inevitably raises a significant number of intellectual and methodological challenges. The strengths of the social movements framework are, it can be argued, precisely what potentially limits its explanatory capacity. First, there is no agreed approach as to what a 'social movement' consists of, and none is offered here. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, self-defined social movements, strikes and riots, the mob and the crowd – all have elements of social movement praxis and all may be considered, together with their engagement with political parties, international agencies and other societal agents, in critical analyses of the role of popular social forces in African societies. Social movements manifest themselves in overt institutional and organisational forms, for example as civil society organisations, church or other religious groups and trade unions, but can also take more amorphous and temporary forms, for example protest movements which coalesce briefly around a particular issue or initiative before dissolving into wider society – and they may of course involve both such tendencies. Papers presented to the 'Struggles in Africa' conference analysed not only more formal organised movements, but also religious movements and even armed movements in countries such as Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire (Boas and Dunn 2010), which utilise and articulate social-movement components.

The diverse nature of social movement organisation and activity may provide a particularly useful basis for exploring the particularities of the relationship between local movements and national politics (without ignoring the vital importance of the international order and Africa's specific and subordinate integration into it). However, this very diversity makes it difficult to generalise in a straightforward manner about the particular role played by social movements in representing their constituencies, effectively articulating discontents and bringing about political change. Thus, the challenge of this approach is twofold: to existing interpretations of political power in Africa, and to our own normative assumptions regarding the likely role of social movements in African history or contemporary society. For an elaboration of these arguments, see Larmer *et al.* (forthcoming).

It should be clear that any effective analysis of social movement thinking or activity should explore not only a particular movement, but also the wider context in which it operates. Individual movements or organisations influence, and are influenced by, a wider social, political and economic environment, understanding of which is required in

order to grasp the context in which that movement operates. An instructive example is that of trade unions; these cannot be understood simply in their institutional form, by analysing their internal structures, elected officials and declared policies. Rather, the actions of their rank-and-file members, their relations with the wider political milieu and their interaction with wider urban (and in Africa, rural) communities of the poor, all shape their activities. This is particularly true in an era of economic liberalisation and declining living standards; as large numbers of formal sector workers are retrenched, the relationship between labour organisations with shrinking memberships and social movements seeking to articulate the concerns of the wider urban poor (including many former union members) becomes an increasingly relevant issue in shaping struggles in urban Africa. In a number of cases, former union activists have taken their organisational skills with them into new campaigns for the rights of retrenched workers, against the environmental impact of industry, or into new political campaigns and parties. Rubbers' study in this issue illustrates the activism of workers retrenched from the mining industry in the Democratic Republic of Congo and how, in the absence of a supportive trade union, they have developed their own movement to represent themselves to their former employees, to the Congolese state and to international organisations they hold responsible for their plight. Lacking access to traditional forms of industrial representation and activism, their *Collectif* utilises tactics and discourse influenced by both legal and moral economy approaches, in lobbying national and international agencies.

Social movement research must always have regard to tensions and conflicts, not only between particular movements, but also within them, over a period of time. Any study of a particular movement should take into account the relationship between a series of (usually unequal) actors: its leaders and officials; its paid employees (where relevant); those it seeks to directly represent and benefit; and those who are affected, directly or indirectly, by its activities. Unequal power relations – between the more and less educated, women and men, different ethnic groups, and between a dozen other potential divisionsn – commonly shape social movement discourse or activity (see for example Beckmann and Bujra 2009). Roy, for example, identifies how individual leaders of social movements, sometimes selected because of their education and capacity to negotiate with more powerful structures, are propelled by dynamics of socio-economic inequality into elite positions from which they are unable or unwilling to effectively represent those they are assumed to speak for. Such trajectories are of course accentuated by profound inequalities of wealth, education and power within African societies, turning even ostensibly grassroots social movements by a process of commodification into 'resources in themselves' – akin to Szeftel's African state as a 'resource in itself' (Szeftel 1983).

Studying such movements therefore requires an understanding of social movements as relationships. As E.P. Thompson reminds us in regard to class relationships:

> like any other relationship it is a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop it dead at any given moment and anatomise its structure . . . the relationship must always be embodied in real people and in a real context. (Thompson 1991, p. 8)

Following this, there is no simple way to identify in advance the 'representativeness' of any particular social movement, i.e. the legitimacy of its claims to speak on behalf of particular sections of society. Indeed, there is often a disjuncture between the overt or tacit claims made by social movements in this regard and the actual extent of their legitimacy. In practice, social or protest movements exist along a spectrum that reflects their origins, sources of funding, links to particular nation-states, and ideological bases and divergent social forces.

It may be suggested that larger non-membership NGOs which are highly dependent on state or commercial funding occupy one end of such a spectrum, whilst more grassroots, local and/or membership-based groups with little or no outside funding exist at the other. In practice, however, placing particular movements on such a spectrum is less than straightforward. Movements dominated by middle-class educated activists may powerfully articulate an apparently radical agenda for change, whilst in practice having no effective links to the poor and dispossessed they claim to represent; in contrast, many more grass-roots movements may articulate their aspirations and grievances through less progressive frames of analysis, often drawing on religious or ethnically informed discourses that conventional analysis suggests may militate against the development of an effective emancipatory discourse. Whilst social movements may reflect or articulate in some way the aspirations of some of the poor, their capacity to do this should be assessed through empirical research (as with the articles in this issue) rather than against an externally imposed ideological framework.

In Roy's study for example, struggles over economic issues also become contests over representation, between different organisations' right to speak for Malian peasant cotton producers. The national producers' union, whilst ostensibly the representative body of these farmers, came to act effectively as a 'middle man' between the cotton farmers on the one hand and state buyers, international agencies and the state on the other hand. In the late 1990s, having approved a purchase price for cotton unacceptable to many of its members, its authority was challenged by a production boycott led by a temporary 'crisis committee', which subsequently became a new and apparently more representative producers' union. In turn, however, this new body, dominated by educated elites and drawn into national politics and international negotiations over privatisation, likewise became distanced from those it supposedly represented.

Periodising social movements in Africa

In order to inform the analysis of social movement activity in recent African history, we can identify (drawing on Hrabanski's analysis of three periods in the history of the Senegalese peasant movement) four major periods that have animated social movements in processes of political (and, to a more limited extent, economic and social) change.

Nationalism and social movements

In the 1950s and 1960s, when Africans were engaged in mass movements to secure self-rule and political independence, it was widely understood that nationalist political movements were not generally coherent and unified forces, whose goal was simply 'political' independence. Thomas Hodgkin, in 1956, made the point that the very term 'African nationalism'

> tends to conceal the 'mixed-up' character of African political movements ... Most of these various types of organisation possessed links, formal or informal, with one another. Many of them were not concerned, overtly or primarily, with achieving national independence or stimulating a sense of ... nationhood. (Hodgkin 1956, p. 25)

As Frederick Cooper identified, the anti-colonial struggle was against a form of power which constituted itself in specific economic, social and cultural ways (Cooper 1997). This period was marked by a complex interaction between overtly 'nationalist' parties and a diverse set of political or social movements, which generally supported the general

project for 'independence' but invested it with a range of different meanings and aspirations, social, economic and cultural. From the advent of colonial rule, anti-colonial resistance was often expressed in spiritual form, for example in the 1896/7 uprising against the British South Africa Company in Southern Rhodesia (Ranger 1967), or the Maji-Maji rebellion in Tanganyika (Iliffe 1967). Whilst analysts sympathetic to the nationalist project tended to see the religious aspects of movements such as Mau Mau as forerunners of more 'modern' secular nationalist organisations, it is evident that religious idioms have continued to play a central role in the expression of popular aspirations and grievances in post-colonial Africa, for example in the Mungiki sect in Kenya (see also Rubbers in this issue).

Suppression and incorporation: social movements in post-colonial Africa, 1960–75

The initial post-colonial period, from the early 1960s until around the mid to late 1970s, saw the emergence of a post-independence state dominated by a centralised ruling party, which tended to view the autonomous social movements that had played an important role in mobilising anti-colonial discontent as a threat to or distraction from the central project of national-developmentalism dominated by the post-colonial state. In this second phase, social movement articulation of 'particular' grievances or aspirations was negatively counterposed by nationalist rulers to the monopoly they claimed over the articulation of 'national' interests. Developmental self-initiative by local social movements tended to be stifled by state initiatives for and control over rural initiatives such as cooperatives (as in Hrabanski's illustrative case study). Independent worker and peasant unions were similarly repressed and/or incorporated into party-state structures, severely undermining their capacity for self-representation (Cohen 1981, Crisp 1984). As Roy's study of Mali illustrates, pre-existing peasant unions were dissolved by the party that ruled Mali for the eight years after independence; popular resistance to state controls over agricultural activities were violently repressed. The incorporation of organisations did not, however, equate to the effective incorporation of workers or peasants themselves (Hyden 1980, Isaacman 1993, Bowen 2000).

Economic crisis and social movements in Africa, 1975–89

With the onset of the debt crisis, the reduction of sovereignty and the initial imposition of structural adjustment policies, state hegemony was severely weakened and/or exposed during a third phase of social movement activism. The imposition by African states of direct attacks on living standards of the urban poor in particular led to the 'food riots' of the late 1970s and early 1980s (Zghal 1995). The 1977 revolt in Egypt against the government's decision to raise food and petrol prices under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund was a trigger for the first wave of anti-structural adjustment protests that represented the major popular response to the onset of the continent's profound and enduring economic crisis, and a rejection of attempts by both national governments and the international financial institutions to make the urban poor pay the price of a crisis entirely outside their control.

Simultaneously, however, the partial retreat of the state as a result of the external imposition of early structural adjustment opened up some space for new autonomous forms of organisation, many of which avoided direct political questions and sought instead local solutions to growing economic and social concerns. Although such initiatives were unavoidably political, party-states were often more willing to tolerate limited social movement initiatives which might alleviate problems they were unable to address. In this

context, Hrabanski identifies the emergence of new Senegalese peasant associations, making links with international NGOs (which constructed Africa's problems in terms of 'aid' rather than 'solidarity') and, via these links, accessing funding from international donors for the first time. Although many of these organisations were largely the product of donor funding, others did achieve their own internal dynamic and basis for sustainable existence.

The pro-democracy movements and after, 1990–2010

A fourth phase arrived with the onset of the pro-democracy movements of the early 1990s, in which social movements again played an important role. Diverse and longstanding socio-economic and political grievances combined, in the unforeseen context of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, in a moment when radical political change suddenly became possible across much of the continent. The transition to multi-party democracy achieved in so many countries was not simply an 'elite transition'; it involved mass protest movements and the mobilisation of particular organisations, particularly trade unions and church bodies. However, like their anti-colonial predecessors, the unity displayed by pro-democracy movements in ousting dictatorial regimes commonly masked profound divisions regarding the outcomes they wished to see from this process of democratisation (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). Coinciding as it did with the collapse of communism and the emergence of a unipolar, US-dominated world, political liberalisation was coupled with market-based economic liberalisation as the singular solution to the economic problems of the world in general and of Africa in particular.

The role of social movements, both in this transition and in the constrained democracies that resulted, has been evidently ambiguous. The substantial decline in state capacity and the redirection of external funding to NGOs strengthened some existing social movements with credible grassroots linkages, but simultaneously led to a proliferation of new NGOs, many of which owed their initial existence solely to the availability of donor funding and which were thereby accountable externally rather than to those they claimed to speak for or represent (Harbeson *et al.* 1994). 'Civil society' was freed to act by political liberalisation, but simultaneously hampered in so doing by the deleterious effects of economic liberalisation.

Since the early 1990s, Western and African NGOs have played an important part in promoting a liberal 'participatory' agenda which has the potential to undermine popular opposition to aspects of economic liberalisation and other policies promoted by the West (Gould 2005). In the 1990s and 2000s, popular struggles that have erupted as a consequence of neoliberal reforms and structural adjustment have often manifested themselves as liberal movements for 'democracy' and 'human rights' (Englund 2006). In this context, there is a danger that social movements seeking to alleviate the effects of economic liberalisation pursue their grievances via more formal political or constitutional reform, rather than a deepening of democratic culture and practice that enables strengthened popular scrutiny and (ultimately) control of the socio-economic situation.

In this context, many African social movements (including some analysed in this issue) are dependent for funding on Western agencies, both governments but also international NGOs, think-tanks and civil society organisations (many of which are themselves funded by Western states). In certain circumstances, Western powers and the international financial institutions (IFIs) regard limited forms of social movement mobilisation or protest as a way to undermine particularly 'intransigent' governments that have failed to successfully implement programmes of liberal reform. This should not be reduced to or interpreted as an argument that sees all 'protest movements' as manipulated by Western powers, but

rather as a call for the critical analysis of the influences upon movements engaged in processes of political change.

Globalisation and extraversion

As has already been indicated, throughout all these periods African social movements, far more than their Western counterparts that serve as the basis for much theoretical and conceptual work on social movements (Tilly 1994, Della Porta and Tarrow 2005), have been influenced by their continent's long history of globalisation, one controlled largely by Western powers, but in which African agency was always influential. During the twentieth century, African political and social movements endlessly debated the problematic relationship between distinctly African political concepts and Western liberal or socialist universalisms. African social movements utilised notions and approaches such as self-government, democracy, collective organisation, direct action, political parties and civil society, all of which were in many respects defined by Western thinkers and activists. Although Africans have appropriated, rethought and reworked such concepts, utilising them in their own interests and in hybrid forms relevant to their specific context, a tension nevertheless often arises between such globalised forms of organisation and resistance and the particular context in which they are conceived of and utilised in Africa. This, coupled with the continent's continued poverty and subordination in the global context, militates against the development of a distinctively 'African' form of social movements.

For these reasons and others, social movements actually existing in Africa are unavoidably hybrid in nature, utilising and adapting Western ideas, funding, forms of organisation and methods of activism. Consequently, the enduring influence of universalist models that have their origins in the West, and the profound inequalities and power relations between Western agencies and African social movements, should be part of the analysis of social movements (Pommerolle and Siméant 2008). These issues are further elaborated upon by Pommerolle's article, which examines the role of 'extraversion' in the positions adopted by civil society organisations in Africa (Bayart 1993). Pommerolle explores the complexities of the unequal relationships between Kenyan and Cameroonian civil society organisations, their national states, international NGOs and Western governments, and the ways in which these shape the mobilisation and representation of causes, promoting their conceptualisation in liberal discourses, such as that of 'human rights' or 'good governance'. Although civil society organisations retain a considerable degree of autonomy in these unequal relationships, there is nevertheless a powerful tendency towards the depoliticisation of social conflict as a result.

Pommerolle's conclusions are borne out in the other studies presented in this issue, in which social movements commonly orient their activities towards both their nation-states and one or more international forum or agency. Rubbers' *Collectif* of former mineworkers directs its activities at both national state agencies and international bodies such as the World Bank, in cooperation with Belgian NGOs. In Roy's study of Malian cotton producers, the role of both international donors in general, and the French state's post-colonial relationship with its Malian counterpart in particular, prove to be powerful factors influencing outcomes. Awondo shows how the international authority and funding of Cameroonian homosexual rights organisations depend on their capacity to articulate messages that chime with Western NGO priorities. Hrabanski concludes that Senegal's peasant movement

> is not simply the product of its own internal dynamics, but that it has also developed within a multi-level political space wherein it modifies its strategies according to the national and international political environment.

This is not, however, to suggest that African social movements are simply the product of global pressures and circumstances. As Maccatory, Makama Bawa and Poncelet demonstrate in their article, a global phenomenon such as the rise in food prices is experienced very differently in (for example) Niger and Burkina Faso, reflecting distinct local political and economic circumstances and generating varied forms of protests and new social movements as a result. This serves as a useful reminder that, whatever the extent of extraversion or globalisation, social movements continue to operate in particular national environments in which the nation-state continues to be a primary target of activism.

The rise of the anti-globalisation movement from 1999 onwards arguably provided a way of overcoming African social movements' marginalisation and dependency on Western funding (Sen *et al.* 2004). This movement of movements suggested that, in an era of globalised neoliberal capitalism and technological connectivity, a global counter-hegemonic movement of movements could develop in which existing inequalities and hierarchies between Western and non-Western movements might be overcome (Fisher and Ponniah 2003, Negri and Hardt 2005).

Aspects of the anti-globalisation agenda have found particular expression in South Africa as an influence on both social movements protesting against the policies of the ANC government and their intellectual proponents at the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) at the University of KwaZulu Natal. Champions of autonomous social movements have counterposed them to older forms of representation such as the country's trade union movement which, it is suggested, has fatally undermined its capacity to represent the country's workers through its alliance with the African National Congress government (Desai 2002, Pithouse 2008). A great strength of the CCS 'school' is the detailed empirical basis of its research, which has not been replicated elsewhere on the continent. It is questionable, however, how much the particular experience of South Africa can be generalised to the wider continent. Research on African social movement participation in the anti-globalisation movement suggests that, whilst it is in many respects a progressive initiative, its particular *modus operandi* of decentralised and apparently egalitarian decision making unwittingly reflects and reproduces some aspects of the inequalities and injustices of the globalised neoliberal capitalism against which it positions itself (Larmer *et al.* 2009). Despite the best efforts of the organisers of Social Forums (the organisational manifestation of the anti-globalisation movement) to integrate different social groupings, the unintended reproduction of social hierarchies via inequalities of material and intellectual resources leads to the domination of the Forums, which are certainly attended by a wide range of social movements, by both large international NGOs and by those from South Africa, which are advantaged by their particular historical trajectory, ideological development and organisational know-how (Pommerolle and Siméant 2008). Social forums held on the continent have tended to be dominated by a small number of technocratic elite figures, whose attendance is often enabled by Western NGOs and whose accountability to African movements they purport to represent is in practice often undermined by lack of popular comprehension of the globalised policy environment in which they operate (Pommerolle and Siméant 2008).

The changing terrain of struggle

The subject of social movement campaigns and the actors involved have evolved substantially with the increasing heterogeneity of African society in recent decades. Changing class dynamics in African society, arising in part from the devastating impact, both material and ideological, of neoliberalism on organised labour movements across much of the continent

– movements which have played such an important role in political and economic struggles since the 1940s (Cooper 1996) – have altered the nature of social movements and their campaigns. Traditional venues of struggle – the workplace, the land, and others – have been supplemented by new spaces in which power is contested and in which new strategies and modes of struggle manifest themselves. It has long been recognised that peasant resistance may be 'hidden' or indirect, based on escape or non-compliance rather than more overt forms of struggle (Scott 1986, Isaacman 1993, Harrison 2002). It might be suggested that the same may apply to struggles by other elements of African society. Standardised models of industrial action, for example, have often been undermined in Africa by the illegality of strike action and the suppression of public assembly. As economic liberalisation has undermined formal sector employment, many retrenched or casualised workers, often abandoned by their former trade unions, have adopted original methods of representation that raise questions regarding the nature of 'struggle' – see Rubbers' article in this issue. As so often, the material grievances of Rubbers' respondents are framed not by any overtly ideological analysis, but rather ideas of injustice best understood in the context of 'moral economy' (Berman and Lonsdale 1992, p. 9, Siméant 2010).

Debates about morality within African society have become an important focus for struggles in recent decades. The proliferation of civil society and the relative space afforded by democracy, coupled with the increased potential for globalised interactions among national civil societies that this affords, has generated new campaign movements that challenge established social values in African society. Just as African women's movements challenged manifestations of gender inequalities from the 1970s onwards (a process that is far from complete), contestations over sexual freedom have become an important and violently contested new terrain of struggle across Africa, as a new cultural politics pervades the supposedly private space of sexuality. Awondo's study of homosexual rights movements in Cameroon illustrates how the public space opened up by HIV and AIDS for the open discussion of private sexual practices led in turn to campaigns that rejected a public health basis for the legitimate discussion of same-sex sexuality and developed instead a discourse based on gay rights and the legitimacy of a homosexual lifestyle. Such campaigns however, in Cameroon as in much of the continent, have led to a backlash by state and religious authorities, with even relatively liberal figures such as Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai rejecting the legalisation of male homosexual relationships. The capacity for the mobilisation of counter-movements against liberal universalist social agendas by involving the utilisation of Africanist or religious rhetoric should not be underestimated.

Nevertheless, struggles over material circumstances remain central to the creation and recreation of social movements on the continent, which nevertheless articulate their discontent in moral terms. Of most recent significance, the recent wave of protests against the sudden rise in food prices examined by Maccatory, Makama Bawa and Poncelet in this issue demonstrated once again the creative capacity of local activists to generate new and effective urban movements, always building on their historical antecedents and operating in very particular local circumstances.

Social movements and wider political change in Africa

This brings us to the central question of the nature and degree of political change to which social movements may contribute. Progressive Western analysts of African political history have tended over the last 50 years to seek to identify particular social forces or movements that can form the basis of overarching, self-conscious projects of radical political

transformation, usually of the kind that they themselves have already preconceived. Social democrats and liberals saw African nationalism as the answer to the continent's problems, believing that self-rule in the hands of wise indigenous leaders (whose ideas, developed in Western universities and missions, closely resembled their own) would enable steady and controlled change of the sort appropriate to the continent's level of (as they saw it) education and civilisation. Development advisors, seeking to implement their blueprints for economic 'take-off' and 'catch-up', sought to identify indigenous agents of such changes and were constantly disappointed by their inability or unwillingness to play the role prescribed to them. More radical analysts fiercely debated whether the urban working class (Arrighi and Saul 1973, Sandbrook and Cohen 1976), the rural peasantry (Leys 1975), or the Westernised intelligentsia (Cabral 1969), would be in the vanguard of socialist or communist revolution on the continent; and were often dismayed by the dismal results of such vanguardist approaches to radical change. Anti-globalisation activists, in theory more open to diverse forms of political expression and organisation, have more recently been similarly disappointed with the failure of African social movements to sound, look and act like their counterparts in the West or in Latin America. Western observers of many political hues (and their allies amongst Africa's elites) have been periodically seized with enthusiasm about Africa's decade, century, moment or renaissance, and have been rapidly disillusioned with the continent's enduring failure to meet their expectations in a timely manner.

Meanwhile, Africans, individually but also collectively, have gone about the difficult and often dangerous business of organising actions and organisations to improve the particular circumstances of sections of their society and to achieve what Hrabanski terms 'an autonomous self-emancipation dynamic'. These movements at times coalesced into broader movements for social change that carried within them the potential for a radical transformation of society. Whether this potential was achieved or not, it has normally been the case that Western observers have been unable to see past their own expectations and norms, to understand the real extent of these social movements' achievements. This edition of *Review of African Political Economy* invites radical analysts and observers of Africa's contemporary problems and challenges, seeking a singular counter-hegemonic force to provide the answer to the continent's exploitation, marginalisation and suffering, to focus instead on the myriad day-to-day struggles for change that are Africa's true story of struggle.[1] It is perhaps out of these complex and ambiguous movements that the political alternatives to global capitalism's uneven and brutal hegemony will emerge. Messy, ideologically confused, inherently contradictory, such struggles and movements may nevertheless contain within them genuinely organic seeds of indigenous change that may take root and blossom on the continent's rich soil.

Note

1. This counterposing of 'resistance' to 'counter-hegemonic struggle' was recently articulated by John Saul, in his address to the plenary session on 'African Studies in Canada', at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies, Ottawa, 5–7 May 2010.

References

Arrighi, G. and Saul, J.S., 1973. *Essays on the political economy of Africa*. London and New York: Monthly Review Press.

Bayart, J.-F., 1993. *The state in Africa: the politics of the belly*. London: Longman.

Beckmann, N. and Bujra, J., 2009. The 'politics of the queue': PLHA politicisation and AIDS activism in Tanzania. Paper presented at the University of Leeds conference, Democratization in Africa: retrospective and future prospects, 4–5 December 2009. A version of this paper will be published in *Development and Change* in 2010.

Berman, B. and Lonsdale, J., 1992. *Unhappy valley: conflict in Kenya and Africa. Vol 1: state & class*. Oxford: James Currey.

Boas, M. and Dunn, K.C., eds., 2007. *African guerrillas: raging against the machine*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Bowen, M.L., 2000. *The state against the peasantry: rural struggles in colonial and postcolonial Mozambique*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.

Bratton, M. and van de Walle, N., 1997. *Democratic experiments in Africa: regime transitions in comparative perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cabral, A., 1969. *Revolution in Guinea*. London: Stage 1.

Cohen, R., 1981. *Labour and politics in Nigeria, 1945–71*. London: Heinemann.

Cooper, F., 1996. *Decolonization and African society: the labor question in French and British Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cooper, F., 1997. The dialectics of decolonization: nationalism and labor movements in post-war French Africa. *In*: F. Cooper and A. Stoler, eds. *Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 406–436.

Crisp, J., 1984. *The story of an African working class: Ghanaian miners' struggle, 1870–1980*. London: Zed Books.

Della Porta, D. and Tarrow, S., 2005. *Transnational protest and social activism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Desai, A., 2002. *We are the poors: community struggles in post-apartheid South Africa*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Englund, H., 2006. *Prisoners of freedom: human rights and the African poor*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Fisher, W.F. and Ponniah, T., eds., 2003. *Another world is possible: popular alternatives to globalization at the World Social Forum*. London: Zed Books.

Gould, J., ed., 2005. *The new conditionality: the politics of poverty reduction strategies*. London: Zed Books.

Harbeson, J.W., Rothchild, D. and Chazan, N., eds., 1994. *Civil society and the state in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Harrison, G., 2002. *Issues in the contemporary politics of sub-Saharan Africa: the dynamics of struggle and resistance*. New York: Palgrave.

Hodgkin, T., 1956. *Nationalism in colonial Africa*. London: Frederick Muller.

Hyden, G., 1980. *Beyond ujamaa in Tanzania: underdevelopment and an uncaptured peasantry*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Iliffe, J., 1967. The organization of the Maji-Maji rebellion. *Journal of African History*, 8 (3), 495–512.

Isaacman, A., 1993. Peasants and rural social protest in Africa. *In*: F. Cooper, *et al.*, eds. *Confronting historical paradigms: peasants, labour and the capitalist world system in Africa and Latin America*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 205–317.

Larmer, M., Dwyer, P., and Zeilig, L., 2009. Southern African social movements at the 2007 Nairobi World Social Forum. *Global Networks*, 9 (1), 41–62.

Larmer, M., Zeilig, L., and Dwyer, P., forthcoming. *Social movements in Africa*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Leys, C., 1975. *Underdevelopment in Kenya: the political economy of neo-colonialism*. London: Heinemann.

Negri, A. and Hardt, M., 2005. *Multitude: war and democracy in the age of empire*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Pithouse, R., 2008. Coffin for the councillor: a report on the emergence of a shack dwellers' movement in Durban, South Africa. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 41 (1–2), 171–184.

Pommerolle, M.-E. and Siméant, J., 2008. *Un autre monde à Nairobi: le Forum social mondial 2007, entre extraversions et causes africaines*. Paris: Karthala.

Ranger, T.O., 1967. *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896–1897: a study in African resistance*. London: Heinemann.

Sandbrook, R. and Cohen, R., eds., 1976. *The development of an African working class*. London: Longman.

Scott, J., 1986. Everyday forms of peasant resistance. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13 (2), 5–35.

Sen, J., Anand, A., Escobar, A. and Waterman, P., eds., 2004. *The World Social Forum: challenging empires*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Siméant, J., 2010. 'Economie morale' et action collective dans les Afriques: valeur heuristique et usages d'un concept. Paper presented at conference '*Lutter dans les Afriques*', Université Paris - I, 22–23 January 2010.

Szeftel, M., 1983. Political graft and the spoils system in Zambia. The state as a resource in itself. *Review of African Political Economy*, 9 (24), 4–21.

Thompson, E.P., 1991. *The making of the English working class*. London: Penguin.

Tilly, C., 1994. Social movements as historically specific clusters of political performances. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 38, 1–30.

Zghal, A., 1995. The 'bread riot' and the crisis of the one-party system in Tunisia. *In*: M. Mamdani and E. Wamba-dia-Wamba, eds. *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy*. Dakar & Oxford: CODESRIA Book Series, 99–129.

Miles Larmer

Department of History, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK
m.larmer@sheffield.ac.uk

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The politicisation of sexuality and rise of homosexual movements in post-colonial Cameroon[1,2]

Patrick Awondo[a,b*]

[a]École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris; [b]Unité de Recherche 'Migrations et Societé', Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, Paris, France

The article analyses the emergence of 'homosexual' organisations in Cameroon. Originating in a controversy over lists of public figures 'presumed to be homosexual' published in three newspapers in 2006, it explores the link between a critical political analysis of the concept of homosexuality and the emergence of the homosexual movement in Cameroon. Two main organisations, the *Association pour la Défense des droits des homosexuels* (the Association for the Defence of Homosexual Rights [ADEFHO]) and *Alternatives-Cameroun*, cover different areas of activity, one concerned with sexual rights and the other with sexual health. Their connectedness to the international systems in which such causes are categorised is analysed, and it is suggested that this connection operates as both a resource and a constraint. The role of the actors illustrates the political tensions at play: these include youth, organised collectively, who publicly reject homosexuality. The article sets out to give a critical analysis of the issues underlying this confrontation by demonstrating that it is also influenced by post-colonial tensions and their repercussions.

Keywords: homosexuality; homosexual organisations; human rights; cultural citizenship; Cameroon

One of the themes in the many debates on the issue of homosexuality in Africa over the last two decades has been the influence of Western homosexual identity on the continent. Beyond these controversies relating to the 'identity' of individuals or groups (Niang 2010), a concrete actual example of this influence can be seen in the collective movements that have arisen precisely as a result of the opportunity offered by 'the fight against AIDS' (Roberts 1995, Johnson 2007). In 2004, organisations mainly from anglophone countries came together in South Africa to set up a network of affiliated associations with the explicit objective of working together on human rights and on the prevention of HIV and AIDS among sexual minorities (Guéboguo 2008). With only a limited initial following in francophone African countries, the movement is supported by the 'Africagay' network[3] started up in 2007 by *Aides*, the French anti-AIDS non-governmental organisation (NGO). This article explores how these struggles are communicated in daily life in Cameroon, where homosexuality remains punishable by imprisonment without remission, and by a fine of 20,000 to 200,000 CFA francs (approximately €16 to €304).[4]

This article also aims to understand the emergence of the 'homosexual' movement in Cameroon. It shows how individuals engaging in homosexual behaviour, who are not

---

*Email: awondop@ehess.fr

a homogeneous category (Epprecht 2008, Awondo 2010), ally themselves to the cause of 'human rights' (Ropp *et al.* 1999) in order to open up a new terrain of contestation. It describes the rise of organisations that provide a political conceptualisation and analysis of homosexuality in Cameroon by clarifying the interaction among multiple actors in the sphere of 'private sexuality and politics' (Anfred and Oinas 2009). The hypothesis is that this movement demonstrates a methodology in new struggles to redesign concepts of citizenship (Diouf 2003, Sall 2004, Banégas 2006). It illustrates how groups that were previously dominated are attempting to 'renegotiate' their place in society as citizens with 'decent', acceptable sexual practices. The article therefore also sets out to politically define the Cameroonian 'constitution of the "homosexual" subject' (Foucault 1976). Such an interpretation must necessarily take account of the moral issues around the much-debated emergence of 'MSM' activists (men who have sex with men[5]) (Niang 2004) as subjects of Bayart's 'glocalisation' (2004). This movement, which falls immediately within a 'transnational ethical categorisation' (Ropp *et al.* 1999) as an international resource, also reinforces an ideological dependence with regard to Western-based NGOs. For example, recently formed organisations in Cameroon had to fulfil a number of 'identity' conditions in order to receive external support. Three aspects will be analysed here. The first of these will be a diachronic examination of the politicisation of homosexuality in Cameroon, combined with criticism of the state – mainly by the press – against a background of moral panic (Herdt 2009) and post-colonial tensions (Toulou 2007). Second, an examination of the register of language used in the protests, seen through two organisations (*Alternatives-Cameroun* and the Association for the Defence of Homosexual Rights [ADEFHO]) that are active in the areas of the right to healthcare and the right to freedom of sexual expression: this reveals the connections established with transnational organisations. Finally, the central figures in the confrontation over homosexuality will be considered, from 'activists' of 'sexual democratisation' (Fassin 2006) to 'cultural citizens' (Gomez-Perez and Leblanc 2007) who sound the 'moral' alarm in order to maintain the sexual order. The analysis of this recent movement thus forms part of a body of work critiquing the political process approach, whereby domination is organised by and around a single source of power (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). As will be seen, the critique of homosexuality from many social actors forces groups mobilising for homosexual rights to diversify the targets of their campaigns from a simple focus on confrontation with the state.

Media coverage and 'homosexuality': from moral panic to the politicisation of sexuality

At the start of 2006, three independent Cameroonian newspapers published lists of public figures thought to be homosexual. The lists were headlined 'List of queers'[6], 'Top 50 presumed homosexuals in Cameroon' and 'Homosexuality in top state positions' by *Nouvelle Afrique*, *L'Anecdote* and *La Météo* respectively (Eboussi 2007). Before the lists were published, the archbishop of Yaoundé gave his homily during the Christmas 2005 holiday on 'the homosexual problem' that, he asserted, had become a passport for 'preferential treatment' in the public service and a means of 'corrupting the youth … [and] threatening the stability of the family.' In fact persistent rumours had been circulating in local newspapers calling into question the 'homosexual' phenomenon that 'would slyly creep its way into local standards and morality'.[7] The issue caused a shockwave across the country and increased the stigmatisation of homosexuality as an immoral and 'unnatural' practice.

In addition to criticism of homosexuality, the articles in the press challenging 11 government figures amounted to a direct attack on the government in power. The motives behind the attack seem therefore to have been much more political and economic than sexual, since there was as much criticism of political corruption (emphasising the illegitimacy of the government) as of corruption in the civil service and the means for social advancement (such as promotion on the basis of sexual favours). These seem to have been the grounds for the main argument adopted in relation to the 'moralisation of political standards' by journalists and religious actors, but also by youths who set up groups against homosexuality (see below). As asserted by Toulou (2007, p. 78): 'In a context of post-authoritarian restructuring of power relations within the state, denouncing the immoral practices of the political leadership is entirely challenging their methods of government.' For Toulou, stigmatising political elites on the grounds of homosexuality, understood as an amoral and covert practice, can be considered an attempt to discredit a political system considered corrupt on account of its lack of transparency.

Some of the 'public figures' in the press lists instituted proceedings against the publishers of the newspapers that printed the lists (Abéga 2007). Local media followed the progress of these court cases and organised marches in support of journalists accused of 'defamation'. The crowds that marched to the law courts to jeer at the public figures and their defence lawyers confirmed that the 'homosexuality scandal' in Cameroon could be understood as a political confrontation between, on the one hand, a local press in multiple crisis (Atenga 2005) trying to position itself in a 'moral market' (in a context of increasingly diverse moral entrepreneurs), and on the other hand political elites seen as responsible for the country's decline.

Post-colonial tensions were another factor in the politicisation of the issue of homosexuality. For one section of the press, the use of homosexuality as a means of 'political advancement' within the state apparatus had been introduced by Louis-Paul Aujoulat, the historic figure in the French administration who had represented Cameroon in the French National Assembly on the eve of decolonisation. He also helped form the elite that inherited power at independence in 1960. In this context, putting homosexuality on public trial reopened criticism of the post-colonial state, while at the same time highlighting colonial responsibility for the moral degeneration of the country. The premise here was on the extraneous origins of homosexuality making it an avatar of colonialism and, above all, a symbol of the fawning compromise between the current political elite (some of whose members had known Aujoulat) and France, the former colonial power.

One of the most significant articles, written by a former leader of the nationalist party *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) (Union of the Peoples of Cameroon), appeared in *Messager*, the country's biggest independent daily newspaper, in March 2006. It contrasted the two historical figures of Dr Aujoulat, who had 'formed' the political elite and was seen as responsible for what the article called the 'curse of Aujoulat', i.e. homosexuality, and Dr Félix Moumié, the UPC party leader who had continued the nationalist struggle after independence and had been assassinated with the help of the French secret services in November 1960 during his exile in Switzerland. These two figures thus embodied the post-colonial process in a context where the nationalist memory remained '*en errance*'[8] (Mbembe 1986). Using homosexuality as a means to politically discredit and put the state on trial casts light on the interaction between various actors seeking to assert their right to define public morality, including the contest of the press versus politicians. It will be seen below how this stigma of colonialism could be used against those mobilising in support of homosexuality.

Social movements: from 'economies of private sexuality' to 'reconfiguring citizenship'

One of the bases for interpreting the 'movements' that spread across Cameroon in the wake of the 'gay list scandal' can be seen in the behaviour of actors within the political arena and political economies of private sexuality (Anfred and Oinas 2009). There are three players to be considered: first, the press, who (posing as civil society) decided to make the private (sexual) lives of men in public life into a political matter for moral judgment. Second, the organisations, which also gave publicity to private matters from a perspective of 'fundamental rights' (ADEFHO) and as a medical issue justifying public action; and third, the President of the Republic, who in a landmark speech in February 2006, defined the issue as being outside the remit of the public authorities and relegated it to the private sphere. Many ideas therefore emerge from this: an 'exposure' of politicians who had hitherto been protected as statesmen and who were now being challenged by the press's argument that 'sexual immorality' in the private lives of public figures had public repercussions (Pommerolle 2008). This exposure was picked up by organisations campaigning for greater recognition (Fraser 2000), which saw publicity about private sexuality as a strategic opportunity to gain greater legitimacy; and the politicians themselves, trying to maintain their privacy and keep private and public life separate. This political activity on the margins of 'private sexuality' reveals an ongoing discussion around the issue of 'reconfiguring citizenship', i.e. a new way of existing and being in a post-authoritarian space that puts at its centre an aspect that has rarely informed struggles in post-colonial Africa: people's sexuality. While one can think of a number of anti-authority protests that have mobilised youth (Banégas 2006), that have mobilised people for development (Sall 2004) or used forms of cultural activism in monitoring the public arena (Diouf 2003, Gomez-Perez and Leblanc 2007), the idea of the 'sexual citizen', i.e. someone that demands rights linked to his or her sexuality, has not often been publicly expressed.[9] In this respect, this activism on the part of the organisations supporting homosexual rights constitutes a defining moment in reconfiguring the meaning of citizenship in Cameroon, and raises the issue of 'sexual democratisation', that is 'the extension of the democratic domain, with the growing politicisation of issues of gender and sexuality' (Fassin 2006), which has now become a major subject in Africa, but which has been little analysed to date.

ADEFHO: the start of mobilisation and public defence of the 'homosexual defendants'

In the first three months of 2006, some 30 individuals, most of them youths, were in detention for homosexual offences in the central prisons in Yaoundé and Douala. In the longest-standing group in Yaoundé prison (most of those detained since 2005), there were 17 people, aged between 16 and 31. A few months previously, a woman of about 60 had undertaken to get these young people freed. The lawyer Alice Nkom, called to the bar in Douala, explicitly took on the defence of the men and made public announcements about the organisation for the defence of homosexual people's rights, ADEFHO, of which she was the chair. Nkom amazed the press and intrigued public opinion by her pugnacity and commitment, and was soon at the centre of an anti-authority group fighting for 'the right to freedom of sexual expression'. In between hearings where she denounced the 'illegality of the law' condemning homosexuality, and the legal 'technicalities' used in the arrests of the accused, she was interviewed by local and international radio and television channels. ADEFHO, it was revealed, had in fact been set up in 2003 and its registered address was in one of the

districts of Douala. According to the lawyer: 'The organisation had more than 50 members, but they wished to remain anonymous because of social harassment and the risk of prosecution' (Interview, Douala, June 2006). It was hard to find out how many active members there were in ADEFHO, particularly because arrests for homosexuality were increasing throughout the country, forcing its members into hiding. The fact that the organisation had been in existence since 2003 thus invalidates the widespread view that homosexual movements on the continent had emerged only in response to the AIDS crisis (Guéboguo 2008). The experience of ADEFHO in fact shows that the public linking of political analysis and (homo)sexuality described above increased the visibility of small networks of organisations already in existence. Therefore, if the 'gay scandal' had not directly involved the state via some of its representatives, these organisations would have remained largely anonymous. This politicisation, which gave a new visibility to gay sexuality, opened up new possibilities for many organisations, particularly AIDS-related bodies, as will be seen below.

The chair of ADEFHO, 'Mom' as she was called by the handful of young people who went nearly everywhere with her, was soon dubbed 'the homosexuals' champion' by the press. This placed homosexuality on the front page of newspapers that were generally not concerned about those held in prison. Alice Nkom adopted a radical line of defence, declaring Article 347b in the Cameroon penal code, relating to case law on homosexuality, to be invalid. Her reasoning was thus: 'this law that was part of the legal framework under the first republic is in contradiction with the constitutional amendment of 1996 in Cameroon that stipulated that any law not formally adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic may not be enforced' (Interview, Yaoundé, March 2006). This radical line of defence earned her the friendship of young people in Yaoundé and Douala who engaged in homosexual behaviour. Away from the extensive publicity that followed this declaration, a nucleus of young, mostly middle class, people mainly working in the private sector but also in government offices, formed around her legal offices. It was this nucleus of individuals around Alice Nkom that instigated the first crusade for human rights for homosexuals in Cameroon, generating the greatest media coverage since the arrival of the multi-party system in the 1990s.

Categorising systems of protest: from human rights to the politics of recognition

ADEFHO's campaign began to resemble a struggle for recognition in the sense that Fraser (2000), reversing 'misrecognition', speaks of citizen recognition as a 'status'. It was within this logic that the first press releases from an 'arbitrarily stigmatised' group were made public on the international stage and gave form to the first transnational links on behalf of 'Cameroonian homosexuals and MSMs'. This appeared to be the first phase described by Ropp *et al.* (1999, p. 5), during which campaigners place violations of rights on the international agenda via 'moral consciousness-raising'. Messages of support were passed to ADEFHO via campaigning gay and human rights websites mainly in France, but also in South Africa. Amnesty International, the Belgium-based International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), *Interassociative lesbienne, gaie, bi et trans* (Inter-LGBT), Behind the Mask in South Africa and many Western NGOs quickly reacted with petitions, press releases and widespread calls for support. The main theme in these initiatives was constant reference to the rhetoric of 'human rights', and more specifically to the 'right to freedom of sexual expression', seen as a fundamental and inalienable human right.

This international rhetoric was then reinforced from within Cameroon by ADEFHO, which judged Cameroon's democracy in terms of its ability to promote equality of the

sexes and of sexual practices. Cameroon, as a signatory of the Geneva Convention on Human Rights, is often criticised for not respecting the fundamental rights of its citizens. Following ADEFHO's initiative, human rights, the strong link in Bayart's 'transnational ethical norms' (2004), were thus promoted in such a way that the category of homosexuality in Cameroon would be made visible, countering the local media discourse that 'dehumanised' the practice. In April 2006, Alice Nkom was invited to Geneva by an international homosexual rights NGO. Accompanied by two young Cameroonian activists, a lawyer and a student, she called for urgent action in support of 'Cameroonian homosexuals', and initiated the tactic of 'homosexual testimony'[10] on the international stage, which was to become the main weapon in this type of campaigning. The struggle was taken up globally, enabling the raising of funds for the 17 people imprisoned in Yaoundé.

In June 2006, the 17 young men were freed. This first victory by ADEFHO – winning the dismissal of charges on the grounds of lack of proof and legal technicalities – was a great boost for the young campaigning movement. The press, however, denounced the international pressures that, some suggested, contributed to the acquittals. It can be seen from this that the success of mobilising resources and support from Western organisations was turned into a stigma (Ropp *et al.*, 1999). Nkom's open demands for decriminalisation and her appearances in the international media drew the anger of the press, which saw her actions as an extension of 'Western' debates that were unjustified in the local context. For example, in an interview with Radio France International (RFI), Nkom made a scathing attack on the Cameroonian law against homosexuality and accused the country's minister for justice of homophobia (Interview, Alice Nkom, RFI, 'Journal Afrique', 21 August 2007 at 0530, 0630 and 0730, noted by Bernard Najotte). This resulted in the hastily formed '*Collectif des magistrats Camerounais*' (judges' association of Cameroon) registering a formal complaint against Nkom of defamation and incitement to commit criminal acts. When the lawyer came to defend her clients at the law courts in the administrative centre of Yaoundé, she was placed in preventive detention and only released at the end of the day. The suspicion of homosexuality that had hung over the elites, regarded as a symbol of the fawning compromise with Western colonialism, was turned back on Nkom by the judges in an effort to discredit her politically. The resulting risk of stigma frightened off a number of ADEFHO's young supporters, for whom discretion was a necessary way of life (Broqua 2007). This turn of events suggests the need to closely examine the area of internal pressures (in a post-authoritarian period), and how it tends to 'demobilise' people, by means of intimidation and repression against all subversive movements (Pommerolle 2008). In this particular case, the attempt at destabilisation was also linked to a populist option, as a number of elite groups within the judiciary had been disturbed at the rising fame of Alice Nkom.

Alternatives-Cameroun and the 'MSM' fight against AIDS

At the end of 2006, one group of young people left ADEFHO and, led by a young doctor in private practice, started meeting regularly in Douala. Along with a young researcher in social sciences and a Cameroonian homosexual activist living in England who was passing through Cameroon, the doctor formed an association demanding more rights for individuals engaging in (homo)sexual behaviour, including equality before the law. Many young people joined the organisation as members and, after its first meeting in Douala, a committee was formed and two offices were set up in Douala and Yaoundé. The founding charter of the association legally constituted it as a 'human rights organisation' whose policy was particularly connected with young people and sexual minorities.

According to the chair of the organisation, 'the advantage of human rights as a motive is that it covers a wide range of things and enables you not to be disturbed by the authorities or watched by the administration' (Interview, December 2007). Another member argued that 'human rights are a pretext that gives the organisation a legal status – otherwise it wouldn't be able to exist.' At this stage, the organisation had 30 active members and a committee elected by a general assembly that met twice a year. As will be seen, the expansion of the organisation shows that the construction of the self, in the Foucauldian sense of 'subjectivation', compels these people to submit to a domain of homosexual activism within an 'international civil society via the intermediary of the gay organisation movement' (Bayart 2004). In fact affiliation to this international movement preceded the existence of the organisation as a condition for gaining the international support and protection. As Siméant (2008) observed at the World Social Forum in Nairobi in 2007, with the 'Queer Spot' allowing people engaging in homosexual behaviours 'to be heard', the international support is part of a 'visibility strategy' for African activists against the background of international protection afforded by ILGA in Nairobi.

The two young people who accompanied Alice Nkom on her trip to Europe in 2006 made initial contacts with international gay rights organisations and subsequently strengthened these contacts via the Internet. At first, the new organisation announced that it would be providing legal support for people being persecuted for their sexual behaviour, but it quickly focused on the fight against AIDS among MSMs, an internationally sanctioned public health category. *Alternatives-Cameroun*, unlike ADEFHO, was soon provided with a head office, thanks to the support it received from (French) partner organisations such as *Sidaction* or *Aides* and American organisations such as Amfar.

In its first months of existence, *Alternatives-Cameroun* provided legal support for individuals imprisoned for their homosexuality, alongside its campaign work on the prevention of AIDS. This division in its campaigning activities caused problems with ADEFHO and was the first cause of tension between the two organisations. These were exacerbated by *Alternatives-Cameroun*'s membership criteria. While ADEFHO had left the question of identity open (given that Nkom was herself heterosexual), *Alternatives-Cameroun* approached the issue in radical terms. A phrase from a speech by *Alternatives-Cameroun*'s leader became the group's slogan: 'you can't keep talking about us as a problem; gays aren't a problem, they're part of the solution' (Interview, Yaoundé, December 2007).

The organisation's approach, increasingly focused on the question of identity and with regaining control of the homosexual rights campaign, was a part of *Alternatives-Cameroun*'s 'extraversion' strategies. They were responding to the identity model of homosexual organisations in the West, but also in South Africa. Their recent contact with gay activists in Europe (Act-UP-Paris, *Aides*, *Inter-LGBT*) and South Africans (Behind the Mask, ILGA-Africa and others) enabled *Alternatives-Cameroun*'s leaders to form strong relationships and to join already developed transnational protest networks. The young Cameroonians in the organisation were asked to take control of the struggle and not leave it in the hands of a heterosexual woman. They were strongly encouraged in this direction by their peers in their Western and South African partner organisations,[11] having attended meetings to which ADEFHO's Alice Nkom had not been invited. These and other 'summer school' conferences organised for young or potential members served as potential learning spaces for young men to be initiated into issues of homosexual identity and activism.

When *Alternatives-Cameroun* released its first half-year report in 2007, the organisation was already well known internationally and was enjoying a level of credibility arising from the fact that all its committee members were young men who had come out as homosexual. Moreover, as is often the case, the dominant personality of the organisation's founding chair,

the doctor, had gained the trust of large NGOs such as *Aides* or *Sidaction*, which came to see that, by supporting *Alternatives-Cameroun* they could reorient their activities towards the MSM group that they would not otherwise be able to reach. This refocusing of *Alternatives* from sexual rights to sexual health rights illustrates the process of 'socialisation of international norms and discourses and practice' in the domestic context, as analysed by Ropp *et al.* (1999). It is also an example of the 'boomerang model' (Keck and Sikkink 1998) which exists when domestic groups in repressive states bypass their states and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their state. It is worth pointing out that nothing had previously been done by the Cameroonian government to combat AIDS within the MSM group. Unlike ADEFHO, whose chair was constantly in the Cameroon media, to the extent that she became a favoured focus for their stories, *Alternatives-Cameroun* was more externally focused and remained little known by the wider domestic public.

The enforced neutrality of the state

Following his speech denouncing the 'gay list press' in February 2006, Cameroon's president was repeatedly called upon to arbitrate in the dispute that brought one part of the press and 'civil society' into conflict with new organisations campaigning for the rights of 'homosexuals'. It can be seen from this how this struggle was distinct from the collective aggregation mechanisms that historically characterised socio-political conflict in Cameroon, either those linked to the nationalist movement (Joseph 1977, Mbembe 1986) or pro-reform protests initiated by students in the context of the multi-party democracy (Pommerolle 2007). From the start of the homosexual rights movement, the two organisations, both against the established sexual order, were never truly opposed to the state in the sense that the latter might have been identified as the 'enemy to beat'. The character of the two organisations is demonstrated in how each saw the state as both a 'protector' and guarantor of the state of law, but also as a potential 'ally' working towards the decriminalisation of homosexual behaviour.

In an interview, Nkom highlighted 'the confidence that has been placed in the country's leaders' (Interview, Alice Nkom, on RFI *Journal Afrique*, 21 August 2007 at 0530, noted by Bernard Najotte). She quoted directly from the President's speech of February 2006, saying that the president of the Republic had 'reminded us in 2006 that':

> This society of freedom and progress that we are trying to build implies common attachment to the democratic institutions which we are putting in place ... Writing and communicating are, of course, a way of expressing our freedom. But freedom knows limits imposed by respect for privacy ... (République du Cameroun 2006)

'You can see', continued Nkom in the interview, 'that the President of the Republic 'does not exclude homosexuals from the right to a private life that is the right of all human beings.'

In a similar vein, an open letter in June 2007 from *Alternatives-Cameroun* to the President of the Republic referred to the head of state's role of 'father and protector', spoke of his February 2006 speech as 'progressive', and urged him to forge ahead with his 'democratic' choices. This effective 'compact' with the government can be interpreted in more than one way: in one respect, the state, represented by the people named in the newspaper lists, had been indicted by the press and part of society. The state, like the 'presumed homosexual young men' defended by ADEFHO, was therefore among the victims of the public conspiracy. The activists were thus calling on the state not just as a guardian figure. Moreover, as observed by Bernstein (1997), interaction between activists and 'state actors' is

dependent not only on the political environment, but also on the (social) opposition that they face. This nucleus of actors also determines how discursive categories are used by campaigners and activists. The power of the state can therefore not be the sole, exclusive focus of activism, given that there are various sources that have authority and can influence society, as was shown in the insulting messages delivered by the press and religious figures.

A 'multi-institutional approach to the political sphere', such as that put forward by Armstrong and Bernstein (2008), is therefore relevant here in order to understand the rhetoric used by the activists. Such an approach sheds light on the situation in which the state found itself. Consequently, any confrontation by the activists with the state would appear inappropriate. Moreover, the emerging campaigns strategy drew on the lexicon of universal human rights (in the case of ADEFHO), leaving aside the question of 'homosexual identity' that is a central part of European or South African campaigning, and towards which these external actors are trying to steer the focus. In contrast, the strategy in Cameroon involves not directly confronting the executive power, but using language that reconciles homosexual behaviour with 'republican' ideals of respect for individuals' private lives. This therefore links directly to the 'African struggles' of the post-'democratisation' period, seen as struggles to renegotiate what it means to be a citizen. Sall (2004, p. 595) speaks of the role of 'social movement[s] in the renegotiation of the bases of citizenship' and confirms that these particular struggles raise the issue of 'belonging and citizenship', that is 'how societies [in Africa] try to secure the access of the public spheres, that are themselves in the process of being transformed'.

Contrasting organisational and leadership trajectories

This study of the two homosexual rights organisations reveals two opposing models of social mobilisation, each operating in different spheres. While the models show real dynamism in the recently formed organisations, the potentially harmful competition between them, related to access to international resources, is also evident. The legal model appears to have been monopolised by ADEFHO and Alice Nkom, whose primary motive for involvement related to the fact that she was regularly called upon by people engaging in homosexual behaviour. Her capacity to tackle such a difficult subject was also linked to her earlier role in the feminist struggle. For the doctor who established *Alternatives-Cameroun*, the MSM fight against AIDS became the main battle. After treating men engaging in homosexual practices through community networking, he had decided to take a different direction to that chosen by the lawyer whose organisation he had belonged to since before the events of 2006. His view was that 'it was time that homosexual men took a hand in their struggle' (Interview, Douala, December 2007).

These personal histories aside, there seems to be an apparent division in the sharing of knowledge and legitimacy of the protests that confirms the professionalisation of social movements identified in the early 2000s by Eboko and Mandjem (2010). This does not, however, exclude the possibility that the two organisations' activities were very similar, and that it was this that exacerbated the rivalry between them. For example, at the end of 2008, *Alternatives-Cameroun* launched a campaign advocating the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Cameroon. When ADEFHO was invited to join the campaign, they distanced themselves from it, with ADEFHO's vice-chair maintaining that *Alternatives-Cameroun* lacked the necessary legal expertise. He criticised the advocacy campaign in these terms:

> The people at *Alternatives* are forgetting that we at ADEFHO launched a decriminalisation initiative in 2006 aimed at the constitutional council, which is the only body with the authority to do this. *Alternatives* is saying that this can be done by the national assembly, but that's

inconceivable; you see, they don't know anything about law and should be content with treating people. (Interview, December 2009)

There is therefore disagreement over the division of roles. *Alternatives-Cameroun*'s trespass into campaigning in the legal arena, which had hitherto been within the remit of the lawyer's organisation, also jeopardised ADEFHO's 'transnational' connections, in particular by regularly sending out *Alternatives'* quarterly reports to ADEFHO's mailing lists. Nkom had effectively disappeared from transnational networks in 2007, having been gradually displaced by the chair of *Alternatives-Cameroun*, who had become a popular speaker on the conference circuit. Despite this, ADEFHO still managed to maintain a presence within the transnational networks, which enabled the association to become a partner of one of the large French NGOs involved in the setting up of the International Day Against Homophobia. However this did not challenge *Alternatives'* 'transnational leadership' and its status as favourite of the northern organisations. These tensions around access to the international arena led at the start of 2009 to ADEFHO being evicted from the meeting room in Douala that belonged to *Alternatives*, thus creating a breach between the two organisations.

This disagreement between the two organisations, linked in part to competition for access to resources at the international level, also has other roots. *Alternatives-Cameroun* and its rapid expansion was linked as much to the fact that its chair and the majority of its members are male 'homosexuals' (who have declared themselves as such) as to the chair's status as a health professional. Indeed, recruiting and introducing new male members is a requirement for joining the transnational networks, at least in the case of *Alternatives*. Since its formation in 2003, ADEFHO has in fact received very little material support from transnational organisations, and only exists thanks to Nkom. However, *Alternatives* receives enthusiastic support – funding, logistics and human resources – from many Western NGOs, and for a variety of activities, including non-health activities. For example, Alternatives obtained observer status with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, while ADEFHO had been unable to achieve this since it was established.

Accordingly, the fact that ADEFHO's leader was a woman and that she did not seek any connection with lesbian organisations which might potentially have been supportive of the organisation's work, shows that gender divisions and issues of sexual identity overrode international perceptions of the work being carried out on the ground. The two organisations studied in this article hence exemplify two forms of vulnerability brought about by the spread of the homosexual cause. On the one hand one finds that the priorities of the international agenda, in this case the 'health risks for MSMs', therefore become the priority for the Western and South African identity-based organisations, while on the other hand there is the reality that some categories of homosexual identity and behaviour are excluded by this prioritisation. Women engaging in homosexual practices would fall into this second category, ultimately making them victims of their dominated status. In this way, the identity conditions imposed in the transnational male homosexual organisations have led to a cleavage between male homosexual and lesbian causes, which is in no way reflected in everyday experience. This separation has led to the work of an organisation such as ADEFHO being passed over and disregarded. While that organisation had not adopted an 'extraversion' strategy, it was no less central and credible an actor than *Alternatives* in advancing the 'homosexual cause' in Cameroon. Likewise, it appears that the fight against AIDS enabled organisations to obtain support in a relatively short time (as in the case of *Alternatives*), whereas 'the right to freedom of sexual expression' appeared less remunerative from this point of view (as was the case for ADEFHO).

The confrontation between 'homosexual organisations' and new 'cultural citizens'

The concept of 'cultural citizenship' proposed by Miller (1998) in a study of the mass media, used to refer to the practices of spectators that reconfigure public spaces and to citizenship issues in democratic societies, has proven useful in understanding young Muslims and other groups seeking to influence the political and moral debate in West Africa (Gomez-Perez and Leblanc 2007). Their work provided a basis for analysing a 'counter-movement' that had arisen in Cameroon in order to combat homosexuality. Formed by former student leaders, this group demonstrates the need to be mindful of differences when placing 'rebels' to the sexual order in opposition to 'cultural citizens', thus highlighting morality and African cultural exceptionalism as a form of citizenship. In February 2006, the local daily newspaper, the *Messager*, published a press release from *SOS Jeunes*, a group established to say 'no' to homosexuality:

> As young Cameroonians . . . we affirm, in the light of our African traditions and of the texts of revealed religions, that homosexuality is an infamy that young Africans, following the example of their forefathers, must firmly condemn and must purge from the African city.

This was followed by a verdict against which there was no appeal:

> Therefore . . . the youth of Cameroon declares, in the light of all the above, that its watchword is: Homosexuality = zero tolerance, zero debate. (Declaration of the official launch of Operation 'Red card to homosexuality!')

By adopting a binary approach that contrasts the 'depraved' West with 'African values', these young people raise the issue of shifting symbolic norms and the spread of 'causes' between arenas in a globalised world. The rejection of homosexuality is contrasted with polygamy which, according to these youths, is African in nature, and represents a 'cultural nationalism', precisely when 'hatred of the West' (Ziegler 2008) and 'the sudden resurgence of wounded memory' are becoming a rallying cry to the marginalised. Two observations should be made at this point: these youths involved in *SOS Jeunes* were for the most part former student leaders of an organisation that brought all of Cameroon's state universities to a standstill in 2005 with a strike that lasted one month (Pommerolle 2007). These leaders were placed under legal supervision, kept under close surveillance by the public authorities, and excluded from the public debate. The criticism of the state and denunciation of its 'homosexual practices' opened up by the press in 2006 enabled this group of young men to reposition themselves on a public stage that had previously excluded them. The issue of morality raised in the debate over homosexuality thus provided a lever of re-legitimisation to individuals whose language of demands had already been strongly shaped by religion.

Second, this turn of events also reveals competition between different moral actors: members of established religious orders, particularly Catholics, feeling overtaken by the 'new Pentecostal churches' (Lasseur 2005), found in this debate on homosexuality a means of repositioning themselves in the battle for 'spiritual goods'. The privately owned press is another of these moral actors. Tainted by corruption scandals in recent years (Atenga 2005) and adversely affected by the economic crisis, the private press sought to regain its position in the moral debate by launching a crusade against homosexuality, which was explosive because it combined the topicality of corruption among the political elite with the issue of access to employment in a context of mass unemployment. This interaction between moral actors helps us to understand the arguments put forward by *SOS Jeunes*.

Conclusion

This article sought to explain how, in terms of their day-to-day work, activist organisations communicate their campaign for 'homosexual' people's rights in Cameroon. It has demonstrated the multiplicity of actors in both the personal and political spheres. If the work in Cameroon of ADEFHO and *Alternatives-Cameroun* shows that the issue of homosexuality can indeed now be tackled in public, notably by the lawyer Alice Nkom in the media, then the 'Red card' counter-offensive against homosexuality launched by *SOS Jeunes* is a reminder that the scope for such campaigning needs to be kept in perspective. The dependence of the pro-homosexual movement on international support demonstrated by *Alternatives-Cameroun* from the time of its formation, and, more recently (but no less significantly) by ADEFHO, confirms that the furtherance of causes via engagement at the international level, while offering substantial resources to campaigners, is played out on an uneven and unequal playing field. As Pommerolle observed (Conference speech, Africa's Struggles, University of Paris I - Sorbonne, January 2010):

> If these external actors sometimes provide protection or a refuge, these are the people who can give access to the international media and to the international arena, to financial resources and to contacts. These are the people who decide on the skills now considered appropriate and effective, and who supply training or assistance.

These international resources can also arguably contribute to the delegitimisation on the ground of campaigning organisations in places formerly under colonial rule, where homosexuality has become a part of the cause of cultural nationalism. Compared to the guardian figure of the President of the Republic, constrained by neutrality, the international level and the baggage of its 'colonial' link remain a double-edged sword that is as capable of 'destroying' as it is of serving the cause.

Acknowledgements

Note on contributor

Patrick Awondo has been studying for a Doctorate in Sociology at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, EHESS-Paris, since 2008. His thesis is on the subject of homosexual migrations and trajectories from Cameroon to France in a time of AIDS. He is also a junior researcher in the *Unité de Recherche 'Migrations et Societé'*, part of the *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement*, a French public science and technology research institute, which works with and aims to contribute to the sustainable development of the countries of the South.

Notes

1. The data used in this article are the result of research for a doctorate currently being undertaken at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris, with support from the National Agency for Research on AIDS and Hepatitis (ANRS).
2. This article was translated for *ROAPE* from the original French text by Clare Smedley. Email: claresmedleytranslations@yahoo.co.uk
3. See http://www.africagay.org.
4. See Article 347b of the Cameroon penal code.

5. The use of the term 'men who have sex with men' is about distinguishing between men who engage in homosexual practices who do not recognise themselves as homosexuals, and 'identity' homosexuals based mainly on their having 'come out', as a means of 'performative' designation and identity construction.
6. '*Liste des pédés*'.
7. For a summary of articles in the Cameroon press, see the *Courier international*, 22 February 2006; see also Olinga (2006).
8. '*En errance*' has a literary meaning of wandering or drifting, and here indicates that the nationalist memory was still unfixed, and not yet the subject of consensus.
9. For significant movements, one needs to look towards South Africa, which is considered an exception for having included protection of sexual orientation in its 1996 constitution, followed by the right to adopt in 2002 and the right to recognition of same-sex unions in 2005.
10. The '*témoignage homosexuel*' in this case involved people, especially activists, telling the story of their own homosexual experience: this storytelling about African/Cameroonian homosexuality is a significant and successful strategy at the international level.
11. That is, all the historic organisations in the North but also South Africa that explicitly and actively (both financially and symbolically) support nascent organisations. The most active in this case were *Aides* and *Inter-LGBT* (in France), Behind the Mask and Ilghra (in South Africa) and ILGA (in Belgium).

References

Abéga, S.-C., 2007. La presse et l'etat, l'exemple des procès sur l'homosexualité au Cameroun. *Terroirs*, 1–2 (*L'homosexualité est bonne à penser*), 95–112.

Armstrong, E.A. and Bernstein, M., 2008. Culture, power and institutions: a multi-institutional politics approach to social movements. *Sociological Theory*, 26 (1), 74–99.

Anfred, S. and Oinas, E., 2009. Introduction: sex & politics in Africa: case Africa. *NORA Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 17 (3), 149–157.

Atenga, T., 2005. La presse privé et le pouvoir au Cameroun: quinze ans de cohabitation houleuse. *Politique africaine*, 97, 33–48.

Awondo, P., 2010. Cameroun. La sexualité entre jeunes hommes dans les années 2000. *In*: V. Blanchard, R. Revenin and J.-J. Yvorel, eds. *Les jeunes et la sexualité. initiations, interdits, identités (XIX–XXIe Siècle)*. Paris: Autrement, 363–374.

Banégas, R., 2006. La France et L'ONU devant le « parlement » de Yopougon: paroles de « jeunes patriotes » et régimes de vérité à Abidjan. *Politique africaine*, 104, 141–158.

Bayart, J.-F., 2004. *Le gouvernement du monde: une critique politique de la globalisation*. Paris: Fayard.

Bernstein, M., 1997. Celebration and suppression: the strategic uses of identity by the lesbian and gay movement. *American Journal of Sociology*, 103, 531–565.

Broqua, C., 2007. Compositions silencieuses avec les normes sexuelles à Bamako. *Terroirs*, 1–2 (*L'Homosexualité est bonne à penser*), 133–147.

Diouf, M., 2003. Engaging postcolonial cultures: African youth and public space. *African Studies Review*, 46 (1), 1–12.

Eboko, F. and Mandjem, Y.-P., 2010. ONG et associations de lutte contre le sida au Cameroun. De la subordination vers l'émancipation à l'heure de l'accès aux traitement antirétroviral. *In*: F. Eboko, C. Abé and C. Laurent, eds. *Accès décentralisé au traitement du Vih/Sida : evaluation de l'expérience Camerounaise*. Paris: ANRS, 269–285.

Eboussi, F., 2007. L'homosexualité au Cameroun: problème politique? *Terroirs*, 1–2 (*L'homosexualité est bonne à penser*), 5–10.

Epprecht, M., 2008. *Heterosexual Africa? The history of an idea from the age of exploration to the age of AIDS*. Ohio: Ohio University Press/University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Fassin, E., 2006. La démocratie sexuelle et le conflit des civilisations. *Multitudes*, 26 (3), 123–131.

Foucault, M., 1976. *La volonté de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard.

Fraser, N., 2000. Rethinking recognition. *New Left Review*, 3, 107–120.

Gomez-Perez, M. and Leblanc, N., 2007. Jeunes musulmans et citoyenneté culturelle: retour sur des expériences de recherche en Afrique de L'Ouest. *Sociologie et sociétés*, 39 (2), 39–59.

Guéboguo, C., 2008. Mobilisations transnationales des communautés homosexuelles en Afrique: une affaire à suivre. *Anthropologie et sociétés*, 32 (1), 85–93.

Herdt, G., 2009. *Moral panic, sex panic: fear and the fight over sexual rights*. New York and London: New York University Press.

Johnson, A., 2007. *Off the map. How HIV/AIDS programming is failing same-sex practicing people in Africa*. New York: IGLHRC.

Joseph, R., 1977. *Radical nationalism in Cameroon: social origins of the U.P.C. rebellion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Keck, M. and Sikkink, K., 1998. *Activists beyond borders*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Lasseur, M., 2005. Cameroun: Les nouveaux territoires de Dieu. *Afrique Contemporaine*, 215 (3), 93–116.

Mbembe, A., 1986. Pouvoir des morts et langages des vivants: les errances de la mémoire nationaliste au Cameroun. *Politique africaine*, 22, 37–72.

Miller, T., 1998. *Technologies of truth: cultural citizenship and the popular media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press.

Niang, C., ed., 2004. *Targeting vulnerable groups in national HIV/AIDS programs: the case of men who have sex with men, Senegal, Burkina Faso, The Gambia*. Washington: The World Bank.

Niang, C., 2010. Understanding sex between men in Senegal: beyond current linguistic and discursive categories. *In*: P. Aggleton and R. Parker, eds. *The Routledge handbook of sexuality, health and right*. London: Routledge.

Olinga, L., 2006. Cameroun: sexe, mensonges et politique [Cameroon: sex, lies and politics]. *Jeune Afrique*, 12 March.

Pommerolle, M.-E., 2007. Routine autoritaire et innovations militantes: le cas d'un mouvement étudiant au Cameroun. *Politique africaine*, 108, 155–172.

Pommerolle, M.-E., 2008. La démobilisation collective au Cameroun. Entre régime postautoritaire et militantisme extraverti. *Critique internationale*, 40 (3), 73–94.

République du Cameroun (RDC), 2006. Speech on 40th National Youth Day by President Paul Biya [online]. 11 February. Available from: http://www.spm.gov.cm/index_ac.php?param=premier_ministre&d=20144&t=dss&lang=en [Accessed 27 August 2010].

Roberts, M., 1995. Emergence of gay identity and gay social movements in developing countries: the AIDS crisis as catalyst. *Alternatives*, 20, 243–264.

Ropp, S., Risse, T. and Sikkink, K., eds., 1999. *The power of human rights: international norms and domestic change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sall, E., 2004. Social movements in the renegotiation of the bases for citizenship in West Africa. *Current Sociology*, 52 (4), 595–614.

Siméant, J., 2008. Le q(ueer) spot: un lieu à part. *In*: M.-E. Pommerolle and J. Simèant, eds. *Un autre monde à Nairobi. Le Forum Social Mondial 2007 entre extraversions et causes Africaines*. Paris: Karthala.

Toulou, L., 2007. Des scènes dignes de Sodome et Gomorrhe? Occulte, pouvoir et imaginaire du changement politique. *Terroirs*, 1–2 (*L'homosexualité est bonne à penser*), 77–94.

Ziegler, J., 2008. *La haine de L'Occident*. Paris: Albin Michel.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Internal dynamics, the state, and recourse to external aid: towards a historical sociology of the peasant movement in Senegal since the 1960s[1]

Marie Hrabanski*

ARENA, Unité sur actions collectives, politiques et marchés, CIRAD centre de recherche agronomique pour le développement, Montpellier, France

The paper presents a historical sociology of the peasant movement in Senegal through three successive periods from its emergence until its internationalisation. The analysis shows that recourse to external aid has been an integral part of the Senegalese peasant movement, in that the movement has developed within a multi-level political space where the government of Senegal and external donors play a decisive role. However, the peasant movement is also a product of its own dynamics and has adjusted its strategies according to the national and international political environment.

Keywords: Senegal; social movement; peasants; government; multi-level; representation of interests; agriculture

When Gentil and Mercoiret considered whether or not a peasant movement existed in Black Africa, they replied in the negative, deciding that 'except perhaps in Senegal, the initiatives analysed do not as yet represent a true peasant movement sufficient in size, organisational effectiveness and future plans to count within the national balance of power' (Gentil and Mercoiret 1991, p. 885). Senegal thus appears to have been part of the avant-garde. Yet, during the colonial period and the years following independence in 1960, Senegal's peasants, although a numerical majority, played a very minor role on the national political scene. Peasant organisations first emerged during the 1970s and a Senegalese peasant movement gradually developed from there.

The Senegalese peasant movement is a social movement in that it is possible to distinguish groups of peasants that are socially mobilised and engaged in a sustained manner in a series of direct political actions oriented around a common objective (Fillieule and Péchu 1993). Its existence refutes ideas of present-day rural escapism (Bayart *et al.* 1992) and culturalist analyses based principally around the alleged docility of the rural world. This article analyses the foundations of the peasant movement in Senegal and the major stages in its stucturalisation from independence to the present day. The aim of this historical sociology of the peasant movement is to assess its different forms of recourse to external aid, approaching the political sociology of extraversion defined by J.-F. Bayart (1996). In particular, it is hypothesised that the peasant movement in Senegal is not simply the product of its own internal dynamics, but that it has also developed

*Email: marie.hrabanski@cirad.fr

within a multi-level political space wherein it modifies its strategies according to the national and international political environment.

Analysis of the scientific and grey literature supplied by various actors (non-governmental organisations [NGOs], trade unions and development organisations), supplemented by semi-structured interviews with a number of key figures (peasant leaders and outside observers), helps to shed light on three periods essential to an understanding of the peasant movement. The paper shows that from the emergence of the movement until its internationalisation, Senegalese peasants have been able to take advantage of the differing strategies of national and extranational political actors, whether donors or NGOs. The current analysis also allows for the specification that that the dynamics demonstrated here are those of peasant self-emancipation – although constrained by a sometimes unfavourable political environment.

The article begins by examining the political situation of the peasantry from 1960 (when the country gained its independence) until the early 1980s. During this first period, Senegal enjoyed state-to-state budgetary support granted by other (mainly European) countries. The state exercised tutelary power over the rural world via state-controlled cooperatives and so undermined any independent initiative taking on the part of the peasantry. The severe droughts of the early 1970s revealed the ineffectiveness of these development cooperatives during a period marked by greater political openness. In this context, peasant resistance strategies no longer needed to be hidden and gave rise to the first peasant associations.

The second period begins in 1984, the year when Senegal entered into a period of structural adjustment and adopted its New Agricultural Policy. From 1984 to 1996, two organisations – the *Fédération des organisations non gouvernementales du Sénégal* (FONGS), and later the *Conseil national de concertation des ruraux* (CNCR) – used the opportunities offered to them within the international environment to assert themselves as credible interlocutors in the eyes of Senegal's decision makers. The final period begins in the late 1990s when, despite a less favourable political environment at home, the Senegalese peasant movement continued to develop at the sub-regional level and even formed links with its international counterparts.

From the independence of Senegal to 1984: the tutelary role of the state and the emergence of a Senegalese peasant movement

From colonial times onwards, politicians and administrators throughout Africa have tried to manage the agricultural world (Lachenmann 1994). Nevertheless, peasant protests did occur and have since been the subject of numerous social science research studies. The literature concerning forms of peasant protest in Africa is therefore rich and varied.[2] Studies reveal examples of many different types of 'everyday peasant resistance' (Scott 1986), both individual and more generalised: cunning, sabotage, fraud and concealment. They hypothesise that 'evasive action' of this type formed the principal component of rural defensive strategies (Spittler 1979). More cautiously, Olivier de Sardan and Bayart suggest that peasant protests tended to operate outside power relationships with local administrators or external actors, characterising this as an 'avoidance strategy' (Olivier de Sardan 1995) or an 'escapist' phenomenon (Bayart *et al.* 1992). By placing particular emphasis on the individual and the hidden dimensions of peasant protest, Isaacman (1993) contends that such arguments assume an absence of rebellions, revolutions or other forms of more ambitious mobilisation. It is certainly true that many actions have gone unrecorded and that it is very difficult for researchers to identify the intentions of protest leaders. Furthermore, studies of African peasant consciousness in periods of protest (Amselle 1978, Ranger

1985) and of 'primary resistance' movements (Ranger 1968) confirm the existence of collective and public forms of action.[3]

The case of Senegal seems also to invalidate ideas of an obedient countryside, even if different forms of rural administration considerably restrict peasant capacity for initiative taking. After independence, President Léopold Senghor and his prime minister Mamadou Dia, of the *Parti socialiste* (PS), sought to make a clean break with the trading economy introduced by the colonial regime, instead creating large peasant cooperatives. But the objectives of these cooperatives quickly turned towards control of the rural world, relegating agricultural development to second place. In addition, the dynamism of the Senegalese groundnut-based economy was shattered in the late 1960s. At that time, the groundnut was Senegal's principal source of agricultural revenue. Between the early 1960s and the early 1980s, however, the price paid to the producer fell by more than 40% in real terms, leading to a savage slowdown throughout the economy. With no independent peasant organisations during this period, initiative lay mainly with the authorities. But the shock of the great drought of 1973/74 fostered the emergence of a peasant movement in Senegal, during a time of growing political openness and democratic inclusion.

The era of state-controlled cooperatives and the stifling of peasant initiative

The post-independence phase is particularly important in the history of Senegal's peasant movement, providing indicators which are key to understanding how the movement would later use this period as a counter-model.

The Senegalese government created state or para-state structures with the express aim of fighting the trading economy. Established by settlers and the large trading companies of the time, this form of economy was a legacy of the colonial period. It was based on the groundnut crop and directed solely towards the export market. More than half of rural dwellers depended directly on large trading companies. The objective of the cooperatives was to create conditions favourable to the emancipation of the peasantry and to eliminate the *traitants* or middlemen – private actors, both local and foreign, who played a role in marketing agricultural produce (Ekanza 2006). Along with newly created state bodies such as the *Office de commercialisation agricole* (OCA) and the *Banque Sénégalaise de développement* (BSD), the cooperatives would take over the role of the *service de traite* (marketing, and input management) and so develop the agricultural world. European, and more particularly French, planners were also involved in these initiatives and helped to set up the cooperatives. The rapid spread of peasant emancipation via the cooperatives brought the elimination of the middlemen from marketing and supply networks. However, the cooperative ethos was quickly supplanted by one of state *dirigisme*, greatly limiting the room for manoeuvre available to the peasants. Although integrated into the state development companies, Senegalese peasants were seldom involved in such roles as popularisation, managing inputs and credit, or even marketing. Their job was simply to follow the directions sent out by the technicians and engineers.

The 1960s saw an increasing number of state or para-state companies, among them the *Office national de coopération et d'assistance au développement* (ONCAD) (Caswell 1984), and the *Société d'aménagement et d'exploitation des terres du delta du fleuve Sénégal* (SAED) (Adams 1977). This trend continued during the 1970s: *Société des terres neuves* (STN) looked after the Niayes region; *Société de développement des fibres textiles* (SODEFITEX), cotton growing; and *Société de développement agricole et industrielle du Sénégal* (SODAGRI), rice culture. But the first problems with this type of structure were already beginning to appear. Indeed, in line with the findings of Noumen (2008)

in his studies of self-governing African cooperatives, corruption, inefficiency and management problems were becoming institutionalised.

The development policies implemented in rural areas during the 1960s reinforced this tendency. The main concern of the governments of Switzerland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and particularly France (then the major donors of foreign aid) was to develop policies capable of rapidly securing financial resources for the Senegalese state. External aid financed para-state companies, such as SAED, and the mass enrolment/training programmes they set up. Until the 1970s, development aid flowed almost solely from state to state, via bilateral and, to a lesser extent, multilateral government organisations, such as United Nations (UN) agencies. Compensating Senegal for its political and economic dependency, this significant external support allowed the government to retain control of the cooperatives and so limit initiative taking on the part of rural dwellers.

> As everybody knows, around 1962 Senegal had a process of creating institutions via multifunctional cooperatives. The fishing sector too was absorbed into these cooperatives, along with the rest of the rural world. The fishing section was spread across the maritime regions of Senegal, particularly Dakar, Thies, Fatik, Ziguinchore etc. There were also fishermen upstream and downstream of this system and the government organised them via the village sections. As a branch of the cooperative movement, the village section was in charge. The Senegalese fishermen hadn't been involved in any of this. 'All we're bothered about is fishing,' they used to tell us. (Interview, Semba Gueye, then Secretary-General of *FENAGIE Pêche* [*Fédération nationale des groupements d'intérêt économique de pêche*], and subsequently President of the CNCR, 2002).

Originally conceived as a peasant emancipation movement, the cooperative system gradually became simply an instrument of power (Gagnon 1974). In addition, it marginalised all previous vehicles of popular participation (such as rural councils and rural development centres). The objective of the state cooperatives was no longer to promote peasant development but to supervise the rural world, gaining control of the groundnut-based economy and the potential financial bounty it represented. The *marabouts* played a full part in this process (Diop and Diouf 2002): they were formidable political operators, and were able to guarantee victory to the *Parti socialiste* at a number of elections (Cruise O'Brien *et al.* 2002).

Yet, despite the supervision of Islamic brotherhoods and state cooperatives, the peasants of Senegal seem to have retained some measure of autonomy. As underlined by the testimony of Famara Diedhiou (1998), some peasants apparently took advantage of the lessons taught by the *Maisons familiales rurales* (MFRs)[4] to exploit local resources independently, outside the cooperative system. Just as they did in Tanzania, the peasants employed resistance strategies in the face of state socialism (Hyden 1980, 1985).

The peasants thus benefited from a partial autonomy (Isaacman 1993), which allowed them to escape external constraints and move beyond a position of submission. If the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the peasantry appears greater than that allowed other social classes, it does seem more generally (as organisational sociology emphasises) that any system of action, however constraining, offers an element of autonomy relative to each actor. Bayart goes even further, stressing that 'situations of enhanced political control … never completely eliminate interventions by subordinate social groups' (Bayart *et al.* 1992). Thus, despite the context, peasant associations first appeared in the rural areas of Senegal in the early 1970s, the forerunners of the wider peasant movement. These early collective initiatives were deliberately unobtrusive, operating on the margins alongside the big state development companies.

The associative movement in rural Senegal in the 1970s: the early days of the peasant movement

The year of the great drought in 1973/74 certainly favoured the emergence of rural initiatives. The United States and Canada allotted a substantial amount of development aid to West Africa (Coste and Egg 1998), with a particular preference for *grands projets* such as dams, turnkey industries and others. Meanwhile the emotional response provoked by the droughts and famines encouraged a growing number of development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Gabas 1989). Use of the term 'NGO' requires further clarification: 'NGOs are often regarded as public interest organisations, however they are in fact a particularly mixed group' (Mayer and Siméant 2004). In considering their legal status, Dorothée Meyer (2004) shows that as long as international law fails to 'define NGOs as a single legal entity … any organisation within the associative sector, in its widest sense, is at liberty to declare itself an NGO'. The term NGO is thus an important indicator of an organisation's public strategy, but has no relevance as an analytical concept.

The increasing number of development NGOs and their growing presence in West Africa can be explained chiefly by rising standards of living in Europe. These facilitated the emergence of Christian (Siméant 2009), Marxist and even post-materialist movements (Inglehart 1977), all prompted by the activities of the humanitarian NGOs. Thus the 1970s saw a transformation of the aid paradigm, favourable both to the creation and support of peasant organisations in Senegal.

Dependent organisations sponsored by NGOs

In contrast to development through *grands projets*, NGO-led associative initiatives wanted to 'short-circuit the neocolonial state and dependent local states by addressing themselves directly to the people' (Hours 1998). These initiatives financed small-scale projects, with the ultimate aim of giving underprivileged populations easier means of access to development. Gentil and Mercoiret describe organisations of this type as 'Initiative NGOs', started up not by governments but by overseas NGOs. These NGO-sponsored organisations were thus created in a rather artificial way to respond to individual projects – short-term, limited in scope and financed by European and North American donors. 'Often arising around micro-projects, NGO-sponsored peasant organisations have developed in a variety of ways: some groups remain very dependent on external support; the project aftermath when funds dry up is painful and the handover process a difficult one. [However] more positive developments exist' (Gentil and Mercoiret 1991, p. 871). These organisations were born of NGO dynamics and designed to implement pre-defined projects, but at the same time other NGOs were emerging, the direct result of initiative taking within the rural world. And it was among these 'endogenous' organisations (Gentil and Mercoiret 1991) that the peasant movement in Senegal was born.

Endogenous organisations at the heart of the peasant movement in Senegal

The peasant organisations linked to the associative movement were the product of local initiative and were independent both of the state and of NGOs. They took the form of peasant organisations, frequently inter-village, sometimes social in character, and often called '*Foyer*' or '*Entente*'. These organisations first appeared in regions that were not involved in groundnut production; nor were they confined solely to the agricultural sector, embracing instead the whole of the rural world.

Around 10 associations slowly took shape in the wake of the 1973/74 droughts. In the Walo area, '*foyers de jeunes*', initially oriented towards sporting activities, took on a wider role in response to the difficulties experienced by the rural population during the great drought (Lecomte 1998). The *Association socio-éducative, sportive et culturelle de l'amicale du Walo* (ASESCAW) first appeared in this context and later became one of the mainstays of the peasant movement in Senegal. The flight of young people from village to town lay behind the *Association des jeunes agriculteurs de Casamance* (AJAC), founded in 1976 (Cissokho 2009). At a local level, the *Entente de Diouloulou* in Casamance and the *Entente de Bamba Thialène* in eastern Senegal (Cissokho 2009) also set themselves up independently to organise peasant activity and respond to poor harvests. These associations gradually defined their areas of competence and moved into more complex undertakings, particularly in the economic field (marketing, seed provision and so on).

Agricultural production at this time was very limited. The state and its development companies made little contribution to the emergency aid provided to peasants who were still obliged to pay the charges levied by the cooperatives. Peasant discontent grew. The perceived injustice of their situation encouraged peasants to mobilise, and also more highly qualified non-peasant activists with a rural background emerged, such as Mamadou Cissokho (founder of the *Entente de Bamba Thialène*) and Abdoulaye Diop (founder of AJAC), both former teachers. These non-government peasant associations, created as a result of peasant initiative-taking, encouraged rural dwellers to assert their independence and act for themselves. This modest dynamic developed alongside the state development companies and posed a direct challenge to them. Opposition to the top-down dynamic of the big state companies lay at the heart of the political engagement of the peasant leaders of independent associations (Lachenmann 1994).

These various endogenous associations all benefited from external support – initially from *Environnement et Développement du Tiers Monde* (ENDA), *Se servir de la saison sèche en Savane et au Sahel* (Six-S) or *Tiers-monde* (Gueneau and Lecomte 1998), and later from several other NGOs and cooperation bodies – and this was essential to their further development. However, they were not the product of dynamics or finance external to Senegal's rural world. Positioned on the margins of the national agricultural development policy implemented by the state, so-called endogenous peasant associations appeared throughout the country and went on to form the heart of the peasant movement in Senegal. A context of growing political openness and democratisation in the mid-1970s made this transformation possible.

Modest developments in a context of greater political openness

The associations extended the range of their economic activities (provision of credit, marketing, training and so on) in micro-projects sponsored by embassies and NGOs: some European (French, Swiss, Dutch and Italian), others national (ENDA) or sub-regional (Six-S). Whether formal or informal, the associations remained modest in their ambitions between 1973 and 1976. Their overriding objective was to gain acceptance by the local authorities. Religious leaders and political representatives alike were profoundly mistrustful, fearing that these new associations would encroach upon their power. The development cooperatives also felt themselves under threat and their officials were particularly hostile. However, the associations were not opposed to Senegal's Islamic brotherhoods, indeed far from it. Mamadou Cissokho explains in his statement (2009, p. 52) that their early thinking made frequent reference to religion, and references to Islam remain common in

Senegalese peasant organisations today. By making this religious element integral to their meetings, and by emphasising the links between their activities and the Koran, the associations succeeded in neutralising the initial hostility of the brotherhoods. This was only possible because their associative dynamic did not pose a direct challenge to Senegal's *contrat social* (Cruise O'Brien *et al.* 2002), based on the mediatory role of the *marabouts*. Likewise, the Senegalese government did not oppose the emerging associations, and occasionally showed some enthusiasm towards their initiatives. The *Parti socialiste* had lost its monopoly on political power after the student protests of 1968 and the strikes of 1973 (Tine 1997). Confronted by popular discontent and peasant unrest, President Senghor made an increasing number of concessions, among them recognition of initiatives of this type. In so doing he ushered in the 'passive revolution' which affected Senegal from 1974 to 1981 (Fatton 1987) and was symbolised by increasing democratisation and the transition from a single-party to a multi-party state.

A number of non-profit organisations developed alongside the Initiative NGOs. Groups of villagers took control of a distinct economic function (marketing, supply, credit) from the government cooperative to which they belonged, and developed a semi-autonomous organisation alongside it. However, these non-profit organisations did not enjoy the same degree of independence as organisations belonging to the associative movement.

In contrast, from 1974 onwards, the young endogenous associations were beginning to get themselves organised. Inspired by the MFRs, twelve associations and several NGOs founded the *Fédération des organisations non gouvernementales du Sénégal* (FONGS). FONGS was created in 1978, and by 1984 was ready to launch a programme of activities and mobilise its members. This was an initiative endogenous to the rural world.

This analysis has demonstrated how relationships between peasant organisations, government and international donors were configured in the years 1960–84. The period saw a transformation in the national political environment, initially hostile to peasant initiatives but more open towards them from the 1970s onwards. At the same time, donors were diversifying their strategies, and direct intervention by European NGOs was beginning to supplement the system of state-to-state budgetary support.

1984–96: the structuring and consolidation of peasant organisations in a multi-level political space

During the 1980s the groundnut economy ran out of steam, state companies like ONCAD collapsed (Caswell 1984) and Senegal went through hard economic times. Corruption, government debt and cronyism provided ample justification for the privatisations demanded in 1984 by the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) of the IMF and the World Bank (Oya 2006). The implementation of these policies in the mid 1980s opened the way to reforms both political and economic, among them the retreat of the state from its agricultural support functions, the dismantling of protection, and the opening up of markets. By promoting decentralisation (already introduced to Senegal with the creation of the *Communautés rurales* in 1972), the SAPs encouraged a drive towards greater participation among local populations. The local thus appeared 'finally (or paradoxically) as a denominator common to both globalisation and decentralisation' (Sawadogo 2001, p. 202). The regionalist bias in development policy evaporated sharply in face of the poor results obtained by the majority of regional organisations. The spread of adjustment programmes and the implementation of decentralisation policies together encouraged the localisation of development aid at the expense of that provided through state budgetary support.

The financial support of donors during this period was crucial, both to the development of the peasant movement and to the continuation of the Senegalese state. When Abdou Diouf (PS) took over as president in 1981, foreign aid allowed him to consolidate his power and so maintain the political stability which characterised the regime of his predecessor, President Senghor (Diop *et al.* 2000). Diouf went on to change the constitution and give official recognition to political pluralism. Foreign aid also helped him to stem popular discontent, but at the same time it reduced the ability of his government to work in relative autonomy towards its own economic objectives. A combination of these different factors (SAPs, decentralisation, and the localisation and development of external aid) transformed the dynamics of the peasant associations launched in the 1970s, and with it the different forms of recourse to external aid.

An increase in the number of cohesive, federated peasant organisations in the context of a 'humanitarian boom'

The implementation of the New Agricultural Policy (Duruflé 1995) and the catastrophic drought of 1983/84 transformed the rural world. The state cooperatives had provided seeds and work, and the sudden disappearance of these services at first left the peasant associations helpless. However, they gradually learned to take advantage of the space for initiative taking created by access to loans from the *Caisse nationale du crédit agricole* (CNCA). Indeed, privatisation actually favoured the rise of peasant associations and unions of peasant groups. The state also encouraged this dynamic by creating GIE (*Groupement d'intérêt économique*) status. Among other things, this allowed peasants to borrow from the CNCA and thus encouraged initiative taking. In addition, the early 1980s saw a 'humanitarian boom', with a sharp increase in the number of humanitarian NGOs, favourable to the funding of short-term projects, at the expense of NGOs aligned with the third-world solidarity movement (Hours 1998).

Coupled with the provision of localised development aid, these opportunities encouraged a rapid expansion in village groups (Mercoiret 2006). By creating a village association or a federation of several organisations, local leaders made local demand for aid visible to donors at a time when the number of humanitarian NGOs was exploding. Development brokers (Blundo 1995), working in the gap between the peasant and development worlds, took advantage of the disintegration of Senegal's social contract between *marabouts* and state to try to seize the resources supplied through international cooperation. They created peasant organisations, some on a rather vague basis, whose primary objective was to make local demands for aid visible to donors. While FONGS was beginning to develop a broader social project for the rural world, the aims of these brokers were rather more limited, often serving personal objectives of social promotion, and an economic rationale (corruption, and redistribution of funds by the broker to the local population) which differed from that set by the donor. One should not, however, draw too sharp a contrast between development brokers and peasant leaders, in that some of the brokers joined what became the organisation representing all Senegalese peasants; however, their origin helps explain the make-up of the movement. Equally, certain leaders of the peasant movement were not lacking social ambition.

As a national organisation trying to unite the peasant associations, FONGS developed alongside a multitude of organisations sponsored by NGOs. From its creation in 1978 FONGS represented a clear break in the political evolution of the rural world in Senegal. It marked the official birth of a peasant movement which had moved from the local to the national scale. From then on FONGS pursued two objectives. Firstly it got down to the

job of encouraging and reinforcing peasant initiative taking by providing technical assistance (training). But it also fought for a certain concept of agriculture, familial agriculture, and certain values (solidarity, fighting poverty), and argued for them with the public authorities.

An extremely dense and diverse network of aid agencies, international donors, NGOs and centres of research and expertise gradually formed around FONGS. Although more than 90% financed by overseas funding, it still managed to develop as an independent organisation. Aid arrived in particular at the second stage and allowed FONGS to consolidate its internal credibility by building up its economic role. The grip of the state over its development companies and the local difficulties of the rural world had left a strong impression on the leaders of FONGS and similar associations (ASESCAW, AJAC and others). Their aim, therefore, was to acquire a wider range of partners to avoid becoming dependent on particular donors. Their recourse to external aid was twofold, donors providing both financial and human resources. 'Flexible' funding and 'Northern' activists of various types (experts, researchers or project leaders) supported projects determined by the Senegalese themselves. These people were there to encourage the development of peasant organisations at the very moment the state was leaving the field and offloading part of its activities onto the peasants. With little preparation for this turn of events, the latter were particularly grateful for the external aid offered by these 'specialists' in supporting 'Southern' peasant organisations and developed affective relationships with them. As genuine activists, they exercised a decisive influence over the evolution of the peasant movement in Senegal. As Mamadou Cissokho commented:

> Ndiougou Fall and I were appointed to set up FONGS. We worked hard to devise and revalidate its first training programme and received financial support from several sources, in particular the Ford Foundation in Dakar, which we knew through the good offices of *Innovations et réseaux pour le développement* (IRED), an international network of NGOs and peasant organisations led by a friend, Fernand Vincent. We ran a workshop to put these documents together. It was led by Loïc Barbedette, a friend to peasants and peasant organisations. Barbadette agreed to come and share the adventure with us, because everyone at FONGS was convinced of how much we needed to get ourselves some training. (Cissokho 2009, p. 67)

By the late 1980s, however, FONGS was threatened by internal crisis. Like most organisations, it suffered from recurrent leadership problems, no doubt exacerbated by the 'politics of the belly' some wished to pursue (Bayart 1989). FONGS also came up against a representation deficit; its 24 member associations gave it only 100,000 members out of the 2.3 million peasants in Senegal. However, by making use of international political opportunities, the leaders of FONGS succeeded in building up their position in the national political arena.

International political opportunities, the emergence of the CNCR and the beginnings of dialogue on the national political scene

At the request of FONGS, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) carried out some work on the agricultural situation in Senegal. On its completion, the FONGS leadership had a suggestion for the Senegalese government and the FAO. They put forward the idea of a forum, to be held in 1993, on the topic 'What does the future hold for the Senegalese peasant?' FONGS used the occasion to invite all Senegal's rural and peasant organisations to participate. This included those who had not joined in order to preserve their independence, such as the non-profits (successors to the old government cooperatives), and organisations created on the initiative of NGOs.

The peasant movement in Senegal initially structured itself around FONGS. It brought together a number of endogenous peasant organisations into a single federation, then gradually tried to gather up other organisations, separate in origin, and open itself up to them. This structuralising dynamic must be understood from a constructivist viewpoint (Boltanski 1982), taking as its subject the historical conjuncture within which the peasants established themselves as an explicit group.

In 1993 the movement opened itself up to the whole of the rural world, while continuing to argue for the values (independence from government and donors, familial agriculture as opposed to agribusiness) which had shaped it. The various national federations attending the forum engaged in a series of meetings to agree a number of 'interpretive frameworks' for the 'problem', suggested by FONGS. These included, for example, 'recognition of and respect for the state' and 'willingness to participate in the consultative bodies set up by the state'.

The *Comité national de concertation des ruraux du Sénégal* (CNCR) was established in the same year, officially bringing together FONGS and other independent peasant organisations. The CNCR successfully consolidated its role in the years to follow, participating in several sets of negotiations between the World Bank and the Senegalese government in 1994, 1995 and 1996. Following its own injunction to seek out partnerships, the World Bank was developing relationships with actors hailing from what it termed 'civil society' (Haubert 2000, Offerlé 2003, Roy 2005). 'Civil society' as used by the World Bank is a particularly vague and fluid term. However, the Bank considered that it encompassed the CNCR and as such encouraged the Senegalese government to recognise the new body. This localisation of aid, based on the provision of direct support to peasant organisations and NGOs, confirmed the strategic position of international donors and reduced the power of the state. The CNCR took advantage of opportunities offered in the extranational arena to target its actions and become a legitimate interlocutor in the eyes of the government.

The CNCR leaders gradually developed a consultative relationship with government officials: the public authorities recognised the CNCR as a credible and legitimate actor, and in return the CNCR recognised the pre-eminent role of the state in determining agricultural policy. This consultative relationship presupposed the use of an 'institutional' repertoire of collective action; for example, 'the mobilisation of experts close to the public authorities, and the use of symposia and seminars to develop a vision and promote ideas' (Pesche 2009, p. 142). However, the CNCR had no hesitation in boycotting negotiations with the state in 1996, so signifying its disagreement with government policy (McKeon *et al.* 2004). However, this form of dialogue differed from French-style co-management (Jobert and Muller 1987) in two ways: the public authorities and the CNCR did not jointly manage the sector; moreover, relationships between the *Parti socialiste* and the CNCR were a complex mix, coloured in equal parts by mistrust and self-interest. The numerical and political legitimacy enjoyed by the CNCR, and its growing rural constituency, was a concern to the PS at this time. In response the PS tried to bring the peasant leaders into the party. Some did join, despite the misgivings of members who remained attached to the political independence of their *syndicats*. The remarks of Diery Gaye, Secretary-General of the *Union nationale des producteurs maraîchers du Sénégal* since 1998, make the situation clear:

> In the CNCR there's this real jumble of people with two hats, grower and politician ... and sometimes if there's a choice and the interest of the party is at stake they prefer to toe the party line, and me, I only speak for the growers ... it's classic, it happens in any organisation ... as the president of the CNCR said to us, you know the *Conseil des Ministres* meets on a Thursday in Senegal so if you're an official or are involved with the administration, you

have to check on a Thursday to see whether or not you've been sacked or ... [laughter] ... but I really like him, he says that on Thursdays he doesn't even listen to the radio to find out if he's been sacked ... he has a certain independence. (Interview, February 2009)

The development of the peasant movement in Senegal thus passed through the stage of forming and shaping a representative organisation. The CNCR gradually consolidated its action and structured itself within a relatively stable Senegalese state. The legitimacy of, and pressure exerted by, international actors (NGOs and donors) played a major role in persuading the Senegalese government to recognise the peasant movement, even if any distinction between national and international levels must be qualified, since certain actors could move from one space to the other. Within this political triptych (peasant movement, Senegalese state, international donors), the peasants succeeded in neutralising and absorbing rival peasant organisations. They also came to assert themselves as an essential social group on the national political scene, thanks to the strategic choices made by donors trying to integrate 'civil society' into the political process. Regular institutionalised meetings were scheduled between CNCR officials and the ministries. The CNCR thus took part in two major programmes financed jointly by the World Bank and the government: the *Programme national d'infrastructures rurales* (PNIR) and the *Programme de services agricoles et organisations de producteurs* (PSAOP).

This second period, which ran from 1984 to 2000, underlines the way Abdou Diouf rebuilt the state, ensuring that its continuation provided a political opportunity favourable to the recognition and institutionalisation of the peasant movement in Senegal. However, in 2000, a change of regime modified the relationship between the Senegalese state and the CNCR leaders. In response, the CNCR extended its demands and called on international actors, at the same time developing a sub-regional peasant network.

A change of government and the decline of the peasant movement

Three distinct dynamics simultaneously influenced the evolution of the peasant movement in Senegal from 2000 onwards. The institutionalisation of the Senegalese peasant movement around the state, with the political and/or financial support of NGOs and international donors, was modified following the election of President Abdoulaye Wade of the *Parti démocrate sénégalais* (PDS) in 2000. Simultaneous with this change in Senegal's political system, initiatives launched in the late 1990s by the CNCR in partnership with other sub-regional peasant organisations became a reality, producing a new sub-regional body, the *Réseau des organisations paysannes et des producteurs agricoles* (ROPPA). During this period, the peasant movement extended its political objectives and reached out to extranational actors in order to influence their policies.

A change of government and the decline of the peasant movement in national politics

While the 1990s was a fortunate decade for the peasant movement in terms of recognition and internal consolidation, it also saw an erosion in the power of President Diouf, a victim of internal strife within the *Parti socialiste*, a united opposition, and the collapse of the social contract between the socialist government and the brotherhoods (Diop *et al.* 2000). Abdoulaye Wade became president in 2000, and his election seemed to favour the recentralisation of the government around the presidency. Wade's charisma, his diplomatic activity, and the continuing economic growth experienced by Senegal since the middle of the 1990s were also greatly to his advantage. Moreover, transformations in the

aid paradigm also favoured the concentration of power in state hands (Dahou and Foucher 2004). Project aid, allocated directly to associations and NGOs in the 1990s, had energised the 'civil society' sector since the 1980s, including the umbrella organisations discussed above. However, in the 2000s, the state recovered some legitimacy in the eyes of donors, at least in the area of budget management, and they implemented a new approach. Reverting to budget support allocated directly to the government, it worked to the detriment of project aid and favoured the concentration of power in the hands of the president. From this perspective, social partners like the CNCR were seemingly perceived more as 'foils necessary to satisfy the donors than legitimate representatives' (*ibid.* p. 12).

Despite the prominence of agriculture on the political agenda from 2000 on, dialogue between the CNCR and the government suffered an almost total breakdown. In the words of Pesche, 'a vision of a dual system of agriculture became more pronounced, with a clearly expressed preference on the part of the new government for agribusiness' (Pesche 2009, p. 151). In general, the new presidency gambled on the capacity of the private sector and of capital external to agriculture to develop agriculture in Senegal to a point where it could rival competing nations. The CNCR, in contrast, continued to speak up for familial agriculture, directed above all towards local markets and the reduction of poverty. Nor did President Wade trust the CNCR, considering it too close to the *Parti socialiste*, even though some CNCR members do seem to have joined the PDS when the new regime came to power (Pesche 2009). During this period the government encouraged the establishment and/or the revitalisation of peasant organisations which were rivals to the CNCR and officially supported the new regime.

With no prior discussion with the CNCR, the president and his advisors launched a wide-ranging consultation on agricultural affairs in 2002. However, the CNCR was able to take advantage of the disquiet aroused by government proposals (particularly around issues of land law), and of a lack of cohesion among donors, 'to return in force to the national political scene, develop its policy positions and articulate them clearly as a counter-proposal for a new law' (Pesche 2009, p. 154).

Yet, despite its re-emergence in 2004 during work on the *Loi d'orientation agro-sylvo-pastorale* (LOASP), the CNCR continued to experience problems with the presidency. Following his re-election in 2007, President Wade continued his divide and rule strategy, trying to maintain his grip on agricultural policy by placing organisations representing rural interests in competition with each other. On 16 January 2009, the government even went so far as to issue a circular suspending any form of collaboration with the CNCR. Although dialogue has since resumed, the Wade regime, in line with its clientelist dynamics, fluctuates between coercion and cooptation with regard to the CNCR leaders (Dahou and Foucher 2004). Until now its deep roots, its vision for the future of Senegalese agriculture, and its ability to pursue the federative dynamics of the rural world have allowed the CNCR to fight off these attempts at destabilisation. However, the power of attraction enjoyed by the PDS, and the financial opportunities it can offer actors within the agricultural sector, have shaken the cohesion of the peasant movement. This change in the national political environment, so much less favourable to the CNCR, went hand in hand with a transnationalisation of collective action within the West African agricultural sector.

Participation in international agricultural debates and the transnationalisation of mobilisation

In the 1990s the peasants of Senegal concentrated primarily on setting up a national movement. In 2000, however, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)

adopted its first agricultural policy for the whole of West Africa. Peasant representatives were not consulted beforehand, but this development now allowed them to speak at the regional level. In order to negotiate with organisations representing West Africa as a whole, peasants in the sub-region decided in 2000 that they too would join together in ROPPA.

Other contemporary factors also encouraged those representing peasant interests to play a role via ROPPA on the world stage: the increasing influence of financial institutions, the growing liberalisation of world agricultural markets (Boussard and Delorme 2007), and the multiplication of restrictive agreements affecting West African peasants, among them the Seattle (1999), Doha (2003) and Hong Kong (2005) World Trade Agreements, and the European Union's (EU's) Economic Partnership Agreements (currently under negotiation) and the EU-Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Cotonou Agreement (2000).

ROPPA was created following an agreement between the national federations of 10 countries in the sub-region. The roots of this initiative go back to the 1970s and the *Centre d'études économiques et sociales de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (CESAO). CESAO's work was continued by the NGO Six-S and fostered by a number of initiatives taken by the *Comité permanent Inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel* (CILSS) and the Club du Sahel. During the 1990s, these organisations began to change the way they operated and peasants came to play an increasingly important role. Mamadou Cissokho, then the charismatic leader of the peasant movement in Senegal, created the *Plateforme des Paysans du Sahel* in 1995 in order to promote dialogue at the sub-regional level. The Senegalese movement showed a degree of maturity and institutionalisation far greater than those of other agricultural movements in West Africa, and this conferred on its leaders a key role in ROPPA. In return, ROPPA helped to consolidate, and sometimes even create, national organisations elsewhere in West Africa, since membership of ROPPA required that each country had an organisation in place.

One of ROPPA's first acts was to represent peasant interests in negotiations over WAEMU's agricultural policy. The unprecedented collapse of cotton prices in 2001 also allowed ROPPA to continue its institutionalisation. Indeed, it was on this occasion that African cotton producers became involved on the international scene and appealed to their respective governments (Pesche and Nubukpo 2004). With the help of national and international NGOs, they denounced the unequal position they occupied in world markets, competing with subsidised cotton producers in the EU and the Unites States. ROPPA allowed West Africans to federate demands which cut across the whole of the agricultural sector and question the conditions of their insertion into international markets. Since then, the West African movement has mobilised at each meeting of the World Trade Organisation to put the issue of the contradictions in world agricultural markets onto the international political agenda.

ROPPA was thus quite prepared to appeal to international and West African leaders, particularly over questions of food sovereignty, an issue close to its heart. Indeed, ROPPA succeeded in making food sovereignty a central objective of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) agricultural policy (ECOWAP) (Fouilleux and Balié 2009). Furthermore, ROPPA's ability to identify the issues and the successes or failures of policy implementation has made it an essential actor on the sub-regional level. However, it has been hampered by the same constraints as other peasant organisations, namely lack of financial resources, leadership tensions, and difficulties of coordination and connection with its 'base'.

Within this context ROPPA has made frequent recourse to external aid. The big international donors have sent consultants to provide expert advice (Tremblay 2003). At the

same time, Senegalese and West African peasants have joined a whole network of national and international organisations, inspired by certain 'Northern' NGOs and the Via Campesina, which link family farmers in Asia, Latin America and Europe, and are constructing with them interpretive frameworks for their problems.

Inserted into a multi-level political space, the peasant movement in Senegal has been in a position of regular interaction with a number of distinct extranational players. Peasant leaders entered into a career (Becker 1985) and needed specific skills to do so (Maresca 1983). Moreover, the international dimension of African agricultural issues made the choice of these leaders all the more important. The profile of the CNCR leaders certainly displays selectivity of this sort, because it seems that the majority were educated to a higher level than other members of their communities of origin. The time-consuming nature of their duties typically takes them away from the fields. They are occupied by national issues and an increasing number of meetings with donors, study courses, overseas training and extranational negotiations. Their underlying motivation can be analysed in some detail. Some look principally to Islam to explain their political engagement, recalling the Christian origins of French agricultural organisations (Purseigle 2004); others place greater emphasis on defending the West African way of life (Cissokho 2009), or are perhaps inspired by the opportunity to become part of the political system. All of them move in international circles, and a study of the cognitive frameworks of the overseas actors they encounter would provide an opportunity for further detailed analysis. However, their membership of an international cause is based above all in the local context (Pommerolle *et al.* 2008) – a context which, since the election of President Wade, has scarcely seemed favourable to the peasant movement.

Conclusion

The historical sociology of the peasant movement, over the three successive periods identified here, has demonstrated firstly that the peasants of Senegal, integrated into a multi-level political space, have been able to develop an autonomous self-emancipation dynamic. From the first independent rural associations of the 1970s to the CNCR and ROPPA, Senegalese peasants have succeeded in initiating and maintaining, with more or less difficulty, a credible autonomous political movement.

The analysis has then gone on to show that the relationship of the Senegalese peasant movement with the state and with international donors has profoundly influenced its evolution. Both state and foreign donors offer a combination of opportunity (financial and political) and risk, most notably when they try to control the evolution of the peasant movement, as contemporary circumstances make clear.

Finally, in contrast to the exceptionalist view taken by some research, the historical sociology of the peasant movement presented here forms part of the decompartmentalisation of the study of peasant protest in Africa. The peasant movement emerged in the 1970s in a multi-level political space where government and international donors played the predominant role. The Senegalese peasantry had *de facto* to organise itself within this multi-centred political space, and recourse to external aid was an integral part of the movement. In Europe and the USA, by contrast, bodies representing agricultural interests took shape primarily within a national political environment (Lowi 1969, Jobert and Muller 1987, Hervieu and Lagrave 1992). However, the accelerating pace of market internationalisation led agricultural organisations to extend their strategies for representation and increase the number of their interlocutors, in particular extranationally. The history of the political representation of agriculture differs profoundly between 'North' and 'South'; so too do the resources at the

disposal of producers and the political configurations within which they operate. However, agricultural movements are part of a multi-level and multi-centred political space and as such demand the decompartmentalisation of research.

Note on contributor

Marie Hrabanski is a researcher in political sociology at CIRAD, the French agricultural research centre for development. Her research interests are on the representation of interests in a context of transnationalisation of agricultural policies in Europe and West Africa. She also works on the diffusion of environmental public policy instruments.

Notes

1. This article was translated for *ROAPE* from the original French text by Margaret Sumner. Email: maggie.sumner@googlemail.com
2. For a discussion of the literature concerning peasant protest in Africa cf. Isaacman (1990).
3. Ranger goes so far as to consider the agents of primary resistance as protonationalists.
4. In the mid-1960s, Senegal's *Ministère de l'enseignement technique et de la formation profession-nelle* launched an initiative with methods somewhat different from those of the state development companies: the *Maisons familiales rurales* (MFR), a sort of training organisation for the rural world with the status of an NGO. Structures of this type, inspired by Christian values and close to the social economy, then existed only in France. The ministry, still steeped in African socialism, tried to extend the experiment to Senegal and invited its officials to draw their inspiration from MFRs in France.

References

Adams, A., 1977. The Senegal River Valley: what kind of change? *Review of African Political Economy*, 4 (10), 1–6.

Amselle, J.-L., 1978. La conscience paysanne. La révolte de Ouolossébougou, juin 1968, Mali. *Revue canadienne des études africaines*, 12 (3), 339–355.

Bayart, J.-F., 1996. *L'illusion identitaire*. Paris: Fayard.

Bayart, J.-F., 1989. *L'Etat en Afrique. La politique du ventre*. Paris: Fayard.

Bayart, J.-F., M'Bembe, A., and Toulabor, C., 1992. *La politique par le bas en Afrique noire: contributions à une problèmatique de la démocratie*. Paris: Karthala.

Becker, H., 1985. *Outsiders*. Paris: Métailié.

Blundo, G., 1995. Les courtiers du développement en milieu rural sénégalais. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 35 (127), 73–99.

Boltanski, L., 1982. *Les cadres. La formation d'un groupe social*. Paris: Minuit.

Boussard, J.-M. and Delorme, H., 2007. *La régulation des marchés agricoles internationaux*. Paris: l'Harmattan.

Caswell, N., 1984. Autopsie de L'ONCAD: la politique arachidière au senegal 1966–1980. *Politique Africaine*, 14, 39–73.

Cissokho, M., 2009. *Dieu n'est pas un paysan*. Bonneville et Paris: Grad and Présences Africaines Editions.

Coste, J. and Egg, J., 1998. L'appui de l'Union européenne à l'intégration régionale: une (double) projection trompeuse? Le cas de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. *In*: *Groupement d'Intérêt Scientifique Pour l'Étude de la Mondialisation et du Développement* (GEMDEV), ed. *La Convention de Lomé en question*. Paris: Karthala, 168–185.

Cruise O'Brien, D., Diop, M.C., and Diouf, M., 2002. *La construction de l'état au Sénégal*. Paris: Karthala.

Dahou, T. and Foucher, V., 2004. Le Sénégal, entre changement politique et révolution passive. *Politique africaine*, 96, 5–22.

Diedhiou, F., 1998. *Mouvement paysan sénégalais. Les sentiers du futur*. Dakar: FRAO/WARF.

Diop, M.C. and Diouf, M., 2002. L'administration, les confréries religieuses et la paysannerie. *In*: D.Cruise O'Brien, M.C. Diop and M. Diouf, eds. *La construction de L'état au Sénégal*. Paris: Karthala, 29–48.

Diop, M.C., Diouf, M., and Diaw, A., 2000. Le Baobab a été déraciné. L'alternance au Sénégal. *Politique africaine*, 78, 157–179.

Duruflé, G., 1995. Growth in agriculture and agricultural policy under structural adjustment in Senegal. *Review of African Political Economy*, 22 (63), 73–84.

Ekanza, S.-P., 2006. Le double héritage de l'Afrique. *Études*, 5 (404), 604–616.

Fatton, R., 1987. *The making of a liberal democracy: Senegal's passive revolution, 1975–1985*. Lynne Rienner: Boulder.

Fillieule, O. and Péchu, C., 1993. *Lutter ensemble. Les théories de l'action collective*. Paris: l'Harmattan.

Fouilleux, E. and Balié, J., 2009. Le double paradoxe de la mise en place de politiques agricoles communes en Afrique. Un cas improbable de transfert de politique publique. *Pôle Sud*, 2 (31), 129–149.

Gabas, J.-J., 1989. *L'aide contre le développement? L'exemple du Sahel*. Paris: Economica.

Gagnon, G., 1974. Coopératives, politique et développement. *Sociologie et sociétés*, 6 (2), 87–100.

Gentil, D. and Mercoiret, M.R., 1991. Y a-t-il un mouvement paysan en Afrique noire? *Tiers-Monde*, 32 (128), 867–886.

Gueneau, M.-C. and Lecomte, B., 1998. *Sahel: Les paysans dans les marigots de l'aide*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Haubert, M., 2000. L'idéologie de la société civile. *In*: M. Haubert and P.-P. Rey, eds. *Les sociétés civiles face aux marchés. Le changement social dans le monde postcolonial*. Paris: Karthala, 13–78.

Hervieu, B. and Lagrave, R.-M., 1992. *Les syndicats agricoles en Europe*. Paris: l'Harmattan.

Hours, B., 1998. ONG et idéologies de la solidarité: du développement à l'humanitaire. *In*: J.-P. Deler, Y.A. Fauré, A. Piveteau and P.-J. Roca, eds. *ONG et développement*. Paris: Karthala, 38–46.

Hyden, G., 1980. *Beyond ujamaa in Tanzania. Underdevelopment and an uncaptured peasantry*. London: Heinemann.

Hyden, G., 1985. La crise africaine et la paysannerie non capturée. *Politique africaine*, 18, 93–113.

Inglehart, R., 1977. *The silent revolution: changing values and political style among western publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Isaacman, A., 1990. Peasants and rural social protest in Africa. *African Studies Review*, 33 (2), 1–120.

Isaacman, A., 1993. Peasants and rural social protest in Africa. *In*: F. Cooper, F. Mallon, S. Stern, A. Isaacman and W. Roseberry, eds. *Confronting historical paradigms: peasants, labour and the capitalist world system in Africa and Latin America*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 203–317.

Jobert, B. and Muller, P., 1987. *L'état en action. Politiques publiques et corporatismes*. Paris: PUF.

Lachenmann, G., 1994. Civil society and social movements in Africa. *In*: J.-P. Jacob and P. Lavigne-Delville, eds. *Les associations paysannes en Afrique*. Paris: Karthala, 61–95.

Lecomte, B., 1998. Une micro-histoire associative dans une macro-histoire nationale. *In*: J.-P. Deler, Y.A. Fauré, A. Piveteau and P.-J. Roca, eds. *ONG et développement*. Paris: Karthala, 157–166.

Lowi, T., 1969. *The end of liberalism: ideology, policy and the crisis of public authority*. New York: Norton.

McKeon, N., Watts, M., and Wolford, W., 2004. *Peasant associations in theory and practice*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Maresca, S., 1983. *Les dirigeants paysans*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

Mayer, N. and Siméant, J., 2004. L'espace de l'altermondialisme. *Revue française de science politique*, 54 (3), 373–378.

Mercoiret, M.-R., 2006. Les organisations paysannes et les politiques agricoles. *Afrique contemporaine*, 217 (1), 135–157.

Meyer, D., 2004. ONG: une catégorie juridique introuvable, une définition utilitaire. *In*: P. Dauvin and J. Siméant, eds. *ONG et humanitaire*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 139–160.

Noumen, R., 2008. Les coopératives: des utopies occidentales du XIXe aux pratiques africaines du XXe. *Revue française de gestion*, 8 (188–189), 271–282.

Offerlé, M., 2003. La société civile en question. *Problèmes politiques et sociaux*, 888 (May), 5–12.

Olivier de Sardan, J.P., 1995. *Anthropologie et développement*. Paris: Karthala.

Oya, C., 2006. From state dirigisme to liberalisation in Senegal: four decades of agricultural policy shifts and continuities. *European Journal of Development Research*, 18 (2), 203–234.

Pesche, D., 2009. Construction du mouvement paysan et élaboration des politiques publiques agricoles en Afrique subsaharienne: le cas du Sénégal. *Politique africaine*, 114, 139–155.

Pesche, D. and Nubukpo, K., 2004. L'Afrique du coton à Cancún: les acteurs d'une négociation. *Politique africaine*, 95, 158–168.

Pommerolle, M.-E. and Siméant, J. eds., 2008. *Un autre monde à Nairobi. Le Forum social mondial 2007, entre extraversions et causes africaines*. Paris: Karthala.

Purseigle, F., 2004. *Les sillons de l'engagement. Jeunes agriculteurs et action collective*. Paris: l'Harmattan.

Ranger, T., 1968. Connexions between 'primary resistance' movements and modern mass nationalism in East and Central Africa. *Journal of African History*, 9 (3), 437–453.

Ranger, T., 1985. *Peasant consciousness and guerilla war in Zimbabwe: a comparative study*. London: James Currey.

Roy, A., 2005. La société civile dans le débat politique au Mali. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 178, 573–584.

Sawadogo, R.A., 2001. *L'état africain face à la décentralisation*. Paris: Karthala.

Scott, J., 1986. Everyday forms of peasant resistance. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13 (2), 5–35.

Siméant, J., 2009. Socialisation catholique et biens de salut dans quatre ONG humanitaires françaises. *Mouvement social*, 227 (2), 101–122.

Spittler, G., 1979. Peasants in the state of Niger. *Peasant Studies*, 8 (1), 30–47.

Tine, A., 1997. De l'un au multiple et vice-versa? Essai sur le multipartisme au Sénégal (1974–1996). *Revue camerounaise de science politique*, 1 (3), 61–105.

Tremblay, L., 2003. *Appui au ROPPA dans la mise en œuvre de la politique agricole de l'UEMOA*. Paris: Club du Sahel et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest OCDE, SAH/D.

Peasant struggles in Mali: from defending cotton producers' interests to becoming part of the Malian power structures[1]

Alexis Roy*

Centre d'Études Africaines, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France

This article describes how the organisation and representation of cotton growers in Mali developed from the mid 1970s to the current day, from the setting up of Village Associations through to the privatisation of the cotton industry. The research focused most closely on the relationships between the growers' organisations and the state-owned cotton company, as well as on the different struggles throughout this period. It can be seen that at the same time as peasant participation was increasing, a 'cotton elite' also emerged. Far from reshaping the power structures operating in the cotton sector, this elite appropriated them.

Keywords: Mali; cotton; peasants; privatisation; unions

Even if manual workers and slaves were 'represented' on the council advising the Crown, then their representatives were not tribunes from the masses, or leaders of men taking to heart the needs of a particular stratum of society or class; they did not bring the people together to hear their grievances before going into session. Rather, they became pseudo princes reigning over entire regions, cut off from their original social background. (Diop 1981, p. 232)

These words, written by Cheikh Anta Diop to describe the pre-colonial court of Kayor, in present-day Senegal, have strong resonances now at the start of the twenty-first century in Mali. The linked rise of peasant representation in Mali and a positive rhetoric about civil society has in the first place effectively hidden the power issues that are at stake in seemingly new contexts of political and economic liberalisation. Going back further in the history of Mali (formerly called French Sudan) shows that some of the current issues are not so new. For example, the history of peasant unions does not start in the 1990s: there were already agricultural unions in Sudan. Organisation of the soon-to-be-privatised cotton sector had already functioned under what might be described as a free-market system for much of the colonial period, which also explains the repeated failure of the colonial authorities to gain control of local cotton production (Roberts 1996). Chauveau (1994) showed both how long there has been peasant participation and its ambiguity within the context of broader development systems. The issue of peasant participation, with its constant swing between pessimism and populism, is at the heart of these reflections.

This article will therefore start with a retrospective interpretation of the growth of peasant representation as cotton producers in Mali. There will be a particular emphasis on the strike of 2000, a pivotal period that highlights some of the issues at play. The

---

*Email: royalexi@gmail.com

article will also show the emergence of a number of 'pseudo princes cut off from their roots': this phenomenon was assisted by the interventionism of the state cotton company or its funders, and more generally by the way power is exercised in Mali. Potential movements against power can become part of an existing form of power. Anticipating in some measure the conclusions of the research, it can be said that the rise of peasant representation, while leading to the emergence on to the national scene of a rural elite that had largely been marginalised until then, paradoxically did little to serve the interests of the majority of cotton producers. The principal victories in the struggles (in 1975, 1981, 1991 and 2000) were not won by the unions, and questions can be raised about the motivations of the union representatives, caught up in well known corollary effects of power (such as clientelism, corruption, corrupt practices and cooptation).

Cotton growing has held an important place in Mali's recent history, involving hundreds of thousands of peasants, peasant organisations, the Malian state, a Franco-Malian state cotton company and funders. As the saying goes, the devil is in the detail, and the findings set out below, the results of research from 2005 onwards, cannot give a full picture of the complexity of the alliances and opposing factions involved in organisation in the cotton industry; they should however offer some avenues towards a better understanding of this sector and the power issues that are at stake in present-day Mali.

Peasant participation and resistance: long-standing phenomena

The history of African peasant struggles goes back a long way (Isaacman 1990). While it is not possible within the ambit of this article to set out fully a view of the history of the cotton sector and the unions, it should be noted that in the 1950s there were two peasant unions in existence in Mali, one within the *Office du Niger*, an autonomous public enterprise to build irrigation and attract farming families to the region, and the other around Bamako. Both were dissolved by the Sudanese Union–African Democratic Rally (USRDA) political party that was in power from 1960 to 1968. Mention should also be given to one of the rare popular uprisings in this period, if only to refute interpretations of the peasants as passive: in 1968, in Ouolossébougou, an alliance of peasants and traders clashed with local party officials (Amselle 1978). The protesters were rebelling against the 'voluntary' contributions to the collectively farmed fields, with the profits going to the Malian state, and the ban on private trading of groundnuts. The demonstrations were harshly repressed, with many dead and hundreds arrested. The young Malian state, under the guise of national unity, refused to tolerate the existence of differing views not only from an independent union but also from a more spontaneous movement.

Village Associations: a founding stage in the structuring of cotton growing

It was not until the mid 1970s that significant reform, encouraged by peasant protests, brought new life to their struggle. The Malian Company for the Development of Textiles[2] (CMDT), created in 1974, then took control of cotton farming in partnership with the French state company that had until then been responsible. The extent of its ever-growing prerogatives, its territorial network and its role as a motor of the rural economy of the south all led to its increasing appearance as a state within a state. It took responsibility for relations between the peasants and the state in the south. The relationship between buyer and grower established between CMDT and the peasants was, in some ways, similar to an employer–employee relationship. The confusion of roles between state, government and

CMDT remains striking today, as observed during many of the interviews conducted during the research.

In the developments that led to new unions emerging in the 1990s, CMDT's creation of Village Associations at village level from 1975 onwards is important. This is presented sometimes as a basic reorganisation proposed by Michel Daou, a progressive official in the Fana zone, but was equally a response to the producers' protests. The creation of the Village Associations was not to a significant degree the result of taking into account the peasants' organisational capacity – a capacity built out of a growing antipathy towards cotton farming among producers that were fed up with being cheated by company agents at the weighing of the produce (Docking 1999, p. 114). The creation of the Village Associations, although it now looks like social progress, was in CMDT's view a tool that it could use, but one that had no proper legal status. CMDT transferred to the Village Associations the responsibility for assessing their members' needs according to the size of the land being cultivated by each member, and for carrying out the pre-marketing stages (weighing and storage). There were three constituent functions of the Village Associations: their function in driving forward all agricultural production, including food crops; their function in facilitating access to credit and tools; and their function as the basis for the emergence of a cotton elite.

- **Driving forward all agricultural production:** Cotton producers brought together in the Village Associations all grew food (maize, millet and sorghum) as well as cotton, and benefited from assistance from CMDT, which provided the necessary agricultural inputs.[3] Cotton production was not then in conflict with food production, as it also helped farmers to acquire tools and capital goods, which explained why CMDT often appeared to be a safeguard of food security in the country.
- **Facilitating access to credit:** Farmers took on credit for the whole season's agricultural needs (agricultural inputs, seeds, tools, livestock) via their Village Associations, with guarantees being provided to the bank in the form of a payment at source by CMDT. The system of joint liability meant that the beneficiaries took on the potential debts of farmers in their association that made a loss, which gave rise to numerous tensions, and meant that the greatest liability in view of unknown risks (such as climate or pests) fell heavily on the peasants alone. The functioning of the Village Associations showed the advantage of facilitating access to credit for rural users, but the problem was that they needed to be dependent on cotton to gain that access. The setting up of the local credit unions in the 1990s partly reduced this problem, but anyone wanting access to a sufficient level of credit at the start of the season had to be growing cotton.
- **Basis for the emergence of a cotton elite:** The need to provide training to Village Association managers led to the setting up of rural literacy programmes for some producers. The training had a further effect: by consolidating a cotton elite that it had helped to create, it not only facilitated the creation of an interest group that would seek to defend the cotton producers, but also reinforced the social differentiation of dominant groups at village level. The growers that received training were largely chosen from rural elites, with the training and their new role only consolidating their status. This effectively maintained the earlier practice of the colonial period of selecting *paysans pilotes*, not just on the basis of their assumed abilities, but also for their social position within the villages. These colonial-era *experimental peasant farmers* were appointed to implement innovative growing programmes that it was hoped would demonstrate new ideas and effectively provide training. 'Far from being just an instrument of autonomy for the peasants, the Village Associations

promoted self-exploitation of the villagers, or at least of the poorest ones, to the profit of more affluent peasants and of the development project' (Amselle and Benhamou 1985, p. 91). One of the issues was the management of the administration contribution provided by CMDT to the Village Associations to cover marketing costs, and calculated according to the quantity of cotton produced by them. These promoted a transfer of the abuses by company officials to the newly trained teams in charge of managing the Village Associations. Marketing costs were still used for the associations' capital costs (e.g. building storage depots, purchasing weighing scales), but also, in association with CMDT, for village development projects (such as boreholes and schools).

The creation of Village Associations, as a response to protest movements, constituted a first victory. It was to lead to new protests, and was strengthened by the training and growing knowledge of the functioning of the cotton network. The producers' struggles at this time were based at first upon opposition to the practices of the CMDT officials, behaving as if they were the bosses, and did not at this stage concern the general organisation of the network. In 1981, there was a movement against these officials, with the producers voicing accusations of various abuses. Rather than refusing to grow cotton and falling back on food production, a form of struggle that had already been widely tested by Malian peasants, they used another form of pressure:

> The officials of these teams were little kings. They demanded under-the-counter payments (of money, cereals, animals, etc.), and rigged the scales. In the 1981/82 agricultural season, peasants refused to deliver their cotton to the purchasing teams. After the enquiry, CMDT and the ministry for rural development dealt ruthlessly with the officials responsible. (*Mission de restructuration du secteur coton* [MRSC] 2001)

It is notable that these victories on the part of the producers were obtained under the military dictatorship of the president General Moussa Traoré (1968–91), and proved that Malian peasants were capable of showing fighting spirit and indeed courage, given that the regime at the time was unhesitating in removing a number of its opponents (for example, the assassination of the student leader 'Cabral' in 1980).

The cotton unions under the Third Republic

It was not until the insurrections of March 1991 and the adoption of the new constitution in 1992 that it became easier to set up new agricultural unions.[4] As a result, two unions were set up, both on the initiative of the peasants themselves. These were the *Syndicat des producteurs de coton et vivriers* (SYCOV) (National Union of Cotton and Food Crop Producers), for cotton producers, and which at the outset had a strong peasant membership from the CMDT Koutiala and San region (Docking 1999); and the *Syndicat des paysans du cercle* de Kita (SPCK) (Union of Cotton Producers of Kita), based in the south-west of the country in a zone that at the time mainly produced groundnuts, before being converted to cotton production. SPCK was supported by the historical organisation of affiliated unions, the *Union nationale des travailleurs maliens* (UNTM) (National Association of Malian Workers), which helped it to draft its statutes and to which it was affiliated for a while. These factors differentiate it from SYCOV, which asserted its independence when it was set up. Among the leadership of these unions at the time they were set up, there were many former civil servants who had moved into agricultural production, and particularly into peasant representation.

During various interviews on the short history of these unions, it appeared that being educated and knowledgeable about bureaucratic regulations were determining factors in choosing these leaders, as was a command of the French language. Bingen (1996, p. 26) notes that the leader of the *Comité de coordination des AV et tons*[5] (Committee for the Coordination of Village Associations and Other Organisations) which started the producers' struggle from 1989 onwards, and which led to the setting up of SYCOV, had been chosen because he was the most educated. However he declined the invitation to become leader of the union, leaving this to Baba Antoine Berthé, in order both to increase the geographical base of the union (as Berthé was from Kadiolo, to the south of Sikasso, rather than Koutiala) and on the grounds of his membership of the government service, *Action coopérative* (Cooperative Initiatives). Berthé, however, had not taken part in the 1991 movement[6] and was new to union mobilisation. There is a certain irony not only in the fact that the leader of the first cotton producers' union had come from a background as a civil servant in *Action coopérative*, but also that the formation of the union had been in part a reaction to CMDT's management practices: *Action coopérative* was CMDT's main rival, and jealous of CMDT's extensive powers, which it considered encroached on its own.

At first, SYCOV received financial support[7] that brought it under the suspicion of CMDT, which concluded rather too soon that the SYCOV committee was being exploited with a view to promoting the privatisation of the company. This is an important point, even if it does not seem to have been well founded. SYCOV was not an advocate of privatising the CMDT, but the union's president had a clear grasp of the issue, given that the state cotton companies in most African countries had already been or were about to be privatised. It was this precise point, in addition to the hostile relations between CMDT and the union, that crystallised CMDT's position, and it was CMDT's response to it – its interference in the choice of the peasant representatives – that was to lead to its downfall.

CMDT chose to rid itself of this thorn in its side when the SYCOV committee was re-elected in 1998. As SYCOV did not have sufficient funds, CMDT funded its congress. The corruption of some producers, or rather the spreading of rumours about the current committee in order to discredit them, proved to be an effective strategy that resulted in the election of a new union committee that was conciliatory towards CMDT's interests. The president chosen by the Company, Yaya Traoré, was known for his opposition to privatisation. CMDT thus appeared to have broken the Union's independence, and certainly considered itself to have succeeded in neutralising the union.

The development of peasant representation: from strikes to privatisation

The causes of the conflict: from prices to representation

In 1998, a social movement in the CMDT Koutiala region, birthplace of SYCOV, took a hard line on the cotton purchase price, which was considered too low. The central contract that had been agreed with CMDT, regulating the price-setting mechanism, had expired. SYCOV Koutiala, the only union committee to be voted back in its entirety at the recent congress, perhaps saw the opportunity to take revenge, and urged the producers not to supply their cotton to CMDT. The protests, banned in the Koutiala zone, were marked by confrontations that led to the death of one of the producers. The action was successful, and the purchase price was raised to 185 CFA francs per kilo. This first action was in a way replayed a year later in the industrial action of 1999/2000, except that SYCOV Koutiala then refused to become involved, as it felt that the other CMDT regions had not shown solidarity the year before.

In 1999, the issue of the purchase price was still unsettled as harvest time approached, and the peasants were sure that they would receive at least the same price as the year before. CMDT, however, faced with a collapse in the world price and, under pressure from the World Bank, proposed 150 CFA francs per kilo to the growers. The compensation fund that had been planned in the event of a fall in the world price had disappeared among CMDT's debts. At this time, the cotton producers were basically represented by SYCOV, joined from this period on by SPCK and the *Syndicat des producteurs agricoles du Mali ouest* (SYPAMO) (Union of Agricultural Cotton Producers of Western Mali).[8] SPCK and SYPAMO however, played a minor role as local unions in the Kita zone. When negotiations on the purchase price took place in 1999, only SYCOV and SYPAMO were invited to take part, as CMDT chose not to recognise the legitimacy of SPCK.

'The state does not look to tomorrow. It does not look at the long term.'[9]

The SYCOV officials, not long in office, but also the officials from CMDT and the ministry of agriculture all underestimated the level of discontent of the rank and file of the cotton producers at the lowering of the price to 150 CFA francs, a price that a majority (three out of five) of SYCOV's regional branches had accepted during the consultations. The two exceptions were the Bougouni and Sikasso CMDT regions, which therefore were at the forefront of the strike. SYPAMO fought a campaign in its zone to defend the lower price, with one of its leaders saying to discontented producers: 'You can't eat cotton, and if you don't sell at this price, you're going to have to make it into mattresses and sit on them.' (Interview, S.M. Keïta, Secretary-General, *Union nationale des sociétés coopératives de producteurs de cotton* [UN-SCPC] [National Alliance of Cooperative Societies of Cotton Producers], October 2008.) SPCK, at this time marginalised, waited for the marketing period of the 2000/2001 season before reacting by urging the peasants not to deliver their cotton. In Kokofata, the CMDT regional director was briefly taken hostage when he came accompanied by police to collect the cotton.

One of the reasons that the dispute carried over into 2000 was the way that the Village Associations worked, based on the principle of joint liability, as mentioned above. At a price of 150 CFA francs per kilo, most Village Associations found themselves in debt, and the big producers that were supposed to benefit had to absorb the debts of those who had produced less than foreseen. This led to whole villages being in debt. The Village Associations, paid at the earliest between December and June of the following year, were thus each in turn affected by the fall in the purchase price, and their subsequent debts. The discontent had been growing during harvest time at the end of 1999, and at the start of the following season in mid 2000. During this time, the producers in debt had to give up their capital equipment or even their working cattle. A number of factors inflamed the situation, from the shortcomings of the unions to communication about the change in price.

Given the scale of discontent among the producers, SYCOV reviewed its stance and for a while held out the threat of a strike in cotton production for the 2000 season, before drawing back and encouraging all the peasants to sow the crop. A group of producers based mainly between the towns of Bougouni and Sikasso saw that the union was not prepared to act, and set itself up as a crisis committee, bringing together mostly Village Association officials, but also a local representative of the Chamber of Agriculture and a SYCOV committee member all to differing extents rebelling against the stance being taken by their organisations. Without any support from the unions, they organised general meetings of the producers between March and May 2000. The Crisis Committee sent representatives to different regions and signed up the most aggrieved Village

Associations, and drew up a list of grievances and demands consisting of some 10 points, notably the restoration of the cotton purchase price and the restaging of debt repayments over a longer period. The movement taken up by the Crisis Committee spread, boosted by rural radio stations, and reached virtually nationwide coverage. 'When our claims reached CMDT and the agriculture minister, SYCOV said that we were troublemakers in league with a madman', said Crisis Committee member Tahirou Bemba – the madman being himself (Interview, Bamako, October 2008). The CMDT management and the government remained convinced that the producers would end up at least sowing the cotton, and SYCOV talked the industry out of negotiating with the Committee.

The refusal on the part of CMDT and the authorities to negotiate was perceived as highly contemptuous towards the peasants, and contributed to the radicalisation of the producers: 'The peasants were saying that even under the dictatorship it hadn't been like that' (Interview, Méné Diallo, member of Crisis Committee, March 2007). President of the Republic Alpha Omar Konaré took the measure of the movement far too late, receiving the Crisis Committee only in June 2000 and acceding to most of their demands. The damage had been done and the strike was by then too advanced, resulting in a poor harvest that season. In addition, 50% of producers abandoned cotton growing that year. National production was halved, leading to considerable financial losses on the part of CMDT, the national economy and not least those who had suffered the most, the peasants themselves. The strike constituted a real slap in the face for CMDT, and the state in general, by the peasants. Moreover, the term used to refer to this widespread social movement was significant, as the peasants called it a 'strike' rather than a 'boycott' (which might have been the more correct word), showing that they were no longer afraid to confront their 'boss', CMDT, and even the state. The movement, up against urban elites wavering between paternalism and contempt for the farmers that they pejoratively referred to as '*broussards*', or 'bushmen', made a deep impression on the people that had taken part and revealed the political strength of the peasants, who made up a large majority of the population. The strikers took great pride in this episode, which showed that their opinion needed to be taken into account, as the producers refused to be variables in the production process that could be adjusted at will.

Rebuilding the union landscape: the founding of SYVAC

The dispute sharply divided producers, both at the local level, where strikers in some villages uprooted cotton plants sown by others or threatened non-native inhabitants to take their lands away from them, and at the national level, where the SYCOV official representation became completely discredited. The tensions over the legitimacy of the different peasant representatives were very acute at that time, and the government set up an arbitration committee, led by a former CMDT managing director and assisted by the Chamber of Agriculture, to organise public meetings in order to draw lessons from the crisis. As Bemba noted, 'If SYCOV and the Crisis Committee both went to a meeting, they couldn't go in by the same door' (Interview, T. Bemba, member of Crisis Committee, October 2008). When the arbitration committee decided that a congress should be held to replace the SYCOV committee, the existing committee denied the legality of this decision. The leaders of the Crisis Committee finally set up their own union in 2001, the *Syndicat pour la valorisation des cultures cotonnières et vivrières* (SYVAC) (Union for the Improvement of the Cultivation of Cotton and Food Crop Culture). The setting up of SYVAC was in part a result of CMDT's strategy that sought to heighten the divisions among the producers in order to exploit the rivalries and weaken peasant representation (Berthomé 2003). CMDT's

attempt in 1998 to take control of SYCOV by putting a more conciliatory committee in place had had unexpected repercussions that affected the whole industry, as it was in part the lack of legitimacy of the committee that prevented it from being able to be an effective interlocutor or negotiator when the wave of protest arose from the grassroots. This meant that from the point of the setting up of SYVAC in 2001, the cotton producers were represented by a total of four unions, of which it is difficult to assess the relative strength or influence, with peasants mostly not being formal members of these organisations. SYVAC nevertheless drew its legitimacy for some time from the strike and established itself with meteoric speed. Its strongest presence was in the areas between Bougouni and Sikasso, where the protest had surfaced, but it had no presence in the historical cotton-growing area of Koutiala.

The entire industry had been hugely disrupted by the events of 1998–2000: the strike and the devastating financial effects that followed it opened up the way in 2001 for the World Bank to enforce the privatisation of CMDT that it had been waiting for. The industry was ordered to refocus its activities on cotton and to stop its ancillary activities (such as transport, maintenance of rural roads and drilling boreholes, but also literacy classes for peasants), resulting in 600 redundancies in 2003. CMDT officials, when interviewed, often blamed the privatisation on the producers' strike, as the damage done to the industry's finances had delivered CMDT into the hands of the World Bank. Looking back, it might rather be considered that it was CMDT's strategy that had backfired on it: by replacing the former SYCOV leadership on the pretext that it supported privatisation, CMDT had put in place a committee that it controlled, but which proved incapable of containing the grassroots, which went ahead with its strike against all opposition. The strike placed CMDT and the Malian state in a financial position that left them powerless to oppose privatisation.

Handing over responsibility or buying social peace?

The World Bank and the 'Technical and Financial Partners' demanded that the privatisation of the whole cotton sector[10] be carried out as quickly as possible, but the *Mission de restructuration du secteur coton* (MRSC) (Task Force for the Restructuring of the Cotton Sector) that was in charge of the privatisation process resulted in a series of disappointments. The process, expected by some to be complete in 2005, was still unfinished nine years after its launch, as a consequence of resistance on the part of the Malian state, of CMDT and of the rivalries between the producers' organisations. President Amadou Toumani Touré, known as 'ATT', for example obtained an adjournment of the privatisation before the presidential elections in 2007, probably in order to avoid unpopularity with the electorate, given that cotton provided livelihoods for around three million people. The privatisation process continued sluggishly, and a first attempt to put a geographical cotton region up for sale fell through in 2003. It was not until February 2005 that a new timetable and clear strategy for the privatisation of the industry were put forward (MRSC 2005). One of the essential elements in the preparations was the reorganisation of the producers, in order to strengthen their involvement. The formation of an umbrella organisation, UN-SCPC (National Alliance of Cooperative Societies of Cotton Producers), was asked to represent the producers to private buyers.

The unions learnt in the *Etats généraux du secteur coton* convention of 2001 that they were to be put in temporary charge of the market management of supplying 'non strategic' agricultural inputs to the CMDT Village Associations. This was a strange term to use for inputs used for food crops, which were necessarily very strategic for peasant families, as

they concerned the food security not only of the families, but of the whole nation, given that the Malian cotton-producing area is the most productive agricultural region in the country apart from irrigated zones. In order to manage this important market, the four cotton producers' unions, SYCOV, SYVAC, SPCK and SYPAMO, were brought together under the auspices of the *Groupement des syndicats cotonniers et vivriers du Mali*[11] (GSCVM) (Association of Cotton and Food Producers' Unions of Mali), whose head offices were in the Chamber of Agriculture in Bamako, until the umbrella body that would take on this task could be set up. This transfer of competences had all the signs of a poisoned chalice designed to buy the cooperation of the unions. They shared the roles, but also the resources, by diverting the tendering procedures and overcharging the producers they were supposed to be representing for the agricultural inputs supplied. Their disagreements of the past temporarily put aside, the union leaders were now more occupied with sharing this manna among themselves than in fighting privatisation: this was the almost universal view of the producers interviewed during the research.

During the same period, the president, 'ATT', an independent without his own political party, was running the country with the support of all the political parties represented in the National Assembly under what he called his 'policy of consensus', which can be interpreted as buying social peace after the years of political divisions among the parties. One representative interviewed said that 'GSCVM is a bit like ATT's consensus', and another that 'the peasants have seen that these people [the union leaders] all play the same tune' (Interview, Sidy Coulibaly, former official of Rural Management Programme, September 2008).

The lack of transparency in the management of the inputs severely penalised the industry as a whole, particularly when CMDT was taken to court by a company supplying inputs, which led to the temporary seizure of Malian cotton that was due to be exported. Various incidents of litigation led to some international banks withdrawing from the banking pool that was financing CMDT, thus putting its financial stability in jeopardy. No one worried about the repercussions of this (see, *inter alia*, Dicko 2007)[12], although all eyes turned to Bakary Togola, who since 2004 had become pervasive in all areas of peasant representation. For this reason, he enjoyed the support of state services, of CMDT and the friendship of the head of state (to whom he also, in peremptory fashion, promised '300 votes per village' in the 2007 presidential campaign). Bakary Togola, of whom peasants from his own district liked to say that '*A té sé ka togo sébé'*('he can't write his own name'), was, however, not lacking in skill and persuasiveness, particularly in the financial arena, and became concurrently president of SYCOV and of GSCVM in 2004, president of the Chamber of Agriculture, and finally president of the UN-SCPC, the national umbrella organisation for cotton producers' unions (see above). For many of the peasants interviewed during this research, including some SYCOV members, the accumulation of all peasant representation in one and the same person was problematic. In his capacity as president of GSCVM the peasants judged him responsible for the disastrous management of the trading of non-strategic inputs. All cotton and food producers in southern Mali, it should be remembered, suffered from the rise in the cost of inputs and the overcharging. Speaking about this in 2005, Mansa Sidibé, president of a cotton cooperative, said that 'the union officials had dipped their hands in the blood', as their greed had had serious consequences, affecting the producers' livelihoods and ability to survive (Interview, January 2005). The union leaders were almost universally criticised by the producers interviewed during the research, particularly on account of their being too often in Bamako, necessarily drawn in by the place symbolising the power that corrupted them: the peasant representative that 'lingers on' in Bamako ends up personifying this power and is no longer able to defend the interests of simple village people from the rural areas.

Privatisation of the cotton industry and participation: from the unions to their umbrella organisation

One of the most drawn-out stages of the privatisation process was converting the Village Associations into cooperatives, and the series of elections required to set up their national alliance, an umbrella body. This was to be the joint manager of the network, alongside the private companies that would be taking over from CMDT, as the organisation was to be sold in four parts corresponding to the four geographical zones. It was the *Inter-profession coton* (Cotton Joint-Trade Association), a management board of sorts, that brought together the different actors and shareholders in the network: private companies (with a shareholding of 61%), UN-SCPC (the umbrella body representing the producers, with a shareholding of 20%), the state (17%) and the private company staff members (2%).

This development would at last give the Village Associations a legal identity by converting them into registered cooperatives with documented legal status, and would give them a representative structure, with elections to the different levels (commune, sector, region and national level[13]) of committee representing them. The setting up of the umbrella body, UN-SCPC, considerably reduced the producers' representatives' interest in the unions, which soon became marginalised. As a result, the union officials tended to abandon their organisations to try to get positions in the umbrella organisation, which potentially offered more power, and therefore more possibilities for picking up other sources of income linked to the co-management of the network. However, the function of an umbrella body and that of a union are quite different in theory: the umbrella body was above all envisaged as a socio-professional organisation with economic authority that would be responsible for co-managing the privatised network, whereas the essential role of the unions was to defend the interests of the producers. CMDT, the funders and the peasant elite favoured the economic organisation at the expense of the potentially more political – indeed subversive – organisations, the unions.

The setting up of the umbrella organisation took time and effort. The *Programme d'Amélioration des systémes d'exploitation en zone cotonnière* (PASE) (Programme for Exploitation Systems in the Cotton Zone) (de Noray *et al.* 2007), was set up by the *Agence française de développement* (AFD) (the French Development Agency) and was given the task for the period 2005 to 2007 of piloting the setting up of the cooperatives and the elections that would bring them together into the federated structure, with the Malian Chamber of Agriculture as the contracting authority. During this research, it was noted that many of the producers had difficulties understanding the process. The 30 research consultancies subcontracted under the process, who were responsible for training and information linked to the setting up of the cooperatives, were remunerated according to the number of *Sociétés coopératives de producteurs de coton* (SCPCs, the cotton-producers' cooperatives) set up. The consultancies sometimes employed poorly trained personnel with little knowledge of the network and working in great haste. This led to the formation of over 7000 cotton producers' cooperatives, with many of the members unaware of their purpose. Many producers interviewed were unaware of that the purpose and outcome of the process was the setting up of a national alliance that would represent them after privatisation. Moreover, the competition for jobs in the alliance, with election of representatives at each level, was marked by significant irregularities in the voting. Bakary Togola, by this time well established, had played his game well by becoming the first president of the national alliance of cotton producers' cooperatives (UN-SCPC). The leaders of SYVAC, realising late in the day what the alliance represented and having failed to join it, tried to bring the cotton-producers' cooperatives that were unhappy with the results of the

ballots together under a second alliance, but although it has a legal persona, it has not to date been recognised as a legitimate representative by CMDT, the government departments involved and the funders.

The affront of the setting up of this second alliance was opposed not by the authorities in charge of the privatisation, but by Bakary Togola himself. It is alleged in the press, and by numerous people interviewed during the research, that Bakary Togola was behind decisions by the judiciary to imprison two SYVAC officials, one for having said in an interview that 'we need to have done with Bakary Togola', which was then interpreted by a judge as death threats, and the second for having criticised the judge's decision.[14] During each of the research visits, the unions were becoming more and more inactive, scarcely able to organise basic meetings. 'SYCOV has become an empty sack', said Adama Sangaré, president of the SYCOV Garalo sector (Interview, March 2007). Trade unionism in the cotton industry, marginalised by the funders, in an unequal contest with UN-SCPC and now unwanted as a partner by CMDT, is going through difficult times that could lead to its disappearance. The network is not safe in the future in the event of an open dispute between the UN-SCPC and the unions, with the producers the judges of the matter, as happened in the dispute between the Crisis Committee and SYCOV during the strike of 2000.

The development of the industry over recent years shows that, following record production of over 600,000 tonnes of cotton in 2004, there has been a growing disinclination on the part of producers to grow cotton. This is explained by a series of factors, including the vagaries of the climate that have resulted in poor harvests, and the sometimes low purchase price for cotton, and indeed the increase in the cost of agricultural inputs. This placed the cooperatives deeply in debt, and some of them now function with a very limited number of members. In addition, CMDT was not able to pay the producers in time during the 2007/08 season, and still owed them more than 2 billion CFA francs at the start of the following season. With the industry due to be privatised, in principle at the end of 2010, it is likely that the peasants are waiting to see how things will be in practice, given that their connection with cotton farming, embodied by the relationship with CMDT, was already highly damaged. This can be seen from the large numbers of producers who refused to grow cotton during the 2008/09 season, despite rising cotton prices. Production has therefore plummeted, falling to 190,000 tonnes only four years after the record harvest that shot the country into the lead of sub-Saharan Africa cotton producers. The imminent privatisation of the industry will open a new and unknown chapter, but will be setting out from a very fragile starting point. The cotton sector in most African countries has been weakened for a number of years, on account of both the weakness of the markets, accentuated by the US policy of subsidising its own cotton sector, and of privatisations that have had mitigated results (for a comparative assessment of privatisations in the cotton industry in Africa, see Gorieux 2003). The decline in cotton production in Mali could also have knock-on effects on the country's food production and food security. The cotton producers' cooperatives set up during the privatisation process are first and foremost cotton cooperatives. Growers who give up cotton production therefore find that they are excluded from the food production support system set up by CMDT, and are liable to have problems accessing credit but also agricultural inputs, in the absence of a viable alternative structure (to the cotton cooperatives) in cotton-producing areas.

When the representatives join those in power

'The poor always lose out.' (Amadou Koné, chair of SYVAC Koumantou region, December 2005)

This article has focused mainly on how peasant representation evolved, on its internal tensions and on its relations with its partner organisations. Any emphasis on these tensions within peasant representation should not overshadow the conflict present throughout the whole industry and its partners. Indeed CMDT experienced many latent conflicts among its agronomists, its trainers and its industrialists (known as 'the Russkoffs', given that many had been trained in Russia). The agronomists criticised the trainers for working to put them out of a job by promoting the autonomy of the peasants, and the industrialists accused the agronomists of monopolising the power in the company. The CMDT also had conflictual relationships with various of the state services, with the ministry of agriculture and ministry for social development at the top of this list. These departments envied CMDT's greater powers over social development in the cotton-producing zone, as its prerogatives encroached substantially on their own competencies. For example, the ministry of social development responsible for managing cooperatives contributed significantly to the deterioration in relations during the months of negotiations over the number of representative levels that there would be in the umbrella body; this attitude was due to the French Development Agency (AFD) having chosen the Malian Chamber of Agriculture and private consultancy firms rather than the competent ministry services to manage the establishment of the cotton producers' cooperatives. The funders, apparently united within the 'Technical and Financial Partners' grouping, also experienced conflict. AFD tried to defend first CFDT's interests in the 1990s, and then, once privatisation was under way, the option of an integrated industry that was often at odds with the more liberalised approach favoured by the World Bank.

Finally, over and above these considerations, there were political stakes regarding relations between France and Mali, Mali and the funders, but also within the Malian political class itself regarding what has been called the politicisation of CMDT. As a potential source of funding and on account of its considerable logistical capacity, CMDT had been envied on all sides. The *Alliance pour la démocratie au Mali* (ADEMA), the dominant political party in the 1990s, had greatly benefited from this: many of its important members had come from the CMDT fold, to the point where people talked about a CMDT clan within the party, one example of these being Soumaïla Cissé, losing candidate in the 2002 presidential elections. Another example of political interference was when Drissa Keïta, former managing director of CMDT, was made the main victim of a damning audit of the industry by Ernst & Young. Other people had seen the opportunity to get rid of Keïta, who was rumoured to be a potential candidate in the presidential elections. Clearly in the cotton industry there was a lot at stake and correspondingly high tensions, which affected the majority of the partners.

The emergence of peasant trade unionism in Mali could be interpreted as the awakening of class consciousness in a social group defined by its activity, which would eventually defend the peasants in a system that at least during the colonial period had seen the state and traders fighting over the surplus production of the peasants, who were losing out (Jacquemot 1981). However the opposing power relationships in the organisation of cotton growers helped lead to their exploitation, to the detriment of defending the producers' interests. The history of the agricultural unions shows an enduring mistrust on the part of the political powers and CMDT toward them, and is illustrated by their ambivalent positions, from their efforts at cooptation to their efforts to destroy the unions.

Another lesson that can be drawn from the rise to power of the rural organisations (the Village Associations in the 1970s and 1980s, the unions in the 1990s and UN-SCPC in the 2000s) is that the movement seemed to be operated mainly for the benefit of dominant groups in the rural world, to the detriment of small producers.[15] The affirmation of a

peasant movement showed a (re-)negotiation of how the receipts from cotton were shared out, illustrated by the competition from that point onwards between two groups that fluctuated between cooperation and antagonism – the peasant 'elite' and CMDT. This happened when the responsibilities were transferred from the CMDT grassroots training staff to the offices that managed the Village Associations. At the same time, many abusive practices that had previously been denounced by the producers were transferred. 'Everything that we'd criticised the CMDT training personnel for in terms of abuses was also done by the peasants who had received training, and was done at all levels, from the Village Associations right up to Bakary Togola. The difference was that in the villages they no longer criticised the practices, and just let them get on with it,' said Mamadou Y. Cissé, a retired CMDT employee (Interview, Bamako, October 2008). From the start of the 1980s, there were a number of management problems in Village Associations. The key figures that became their leaders gradually established themselves as intermediate groups between CMDT and the producers that tried to take advantage of this position, helped by their status as educated individuals with a knowledge of the finer points of management and accountancy.[16] Next, the union leaders, who had come from some of these Village Association committees, continued to maintain this situation and to reproduce the corrupt practices extant in the business. Indeed this accelerated when they were given responsibility for managing the 'non-strategic' agricultural inputs from the early 2000s.

How could structures that were created to address particular practices so easily themselves assume these same practices? A study of the career path of several of the leaders of the Village Association, unions and umbrella organisation shows that most of them belonged to groups that were already dominant within the rural context – former civil servants, people elected to local councils, traders, customary authorities, NGO staff, with many of them falling into several of these categories. Furthermore, a number of them were not cotton producers, and sometimes paid for a labourer to cultivate a small area to give them legitimacy. The majority of these rural elites reinforced or reproduced, rather than transformed, the logic of power. The peasants in south Mali, far from being a homogeneous category, had contradictory interests that were highlighted by the liberalisation accompanying the privatisation process in the cotton industry, a liberalisation as much political as economic, in that it allowed a representative leadership to emerge. It might be considered that these liberalisations primarily favoured a transfer of practices: according to analysis of the neopatrimonial and clientelist state (Bayart 1989, Médard 1991), Mali appears to be evolving into a patrimonial and clientelist state, or even into 'uncivil society'. Whereas a dominant position was dependent on the state or on trading, and often on the combination of the two, a third option – that of participation, given the label of 'civil society' – is now open to actors. The dominant class would seem to be made up of three pillars (with some confusion and overlap among them): the bureaucracy pillar, the trader pillar and the civil society pillar. The elites, both old and new, move according to circumstance and strategy between these different pillars. This, like the marked presence of elites within civil society, is unlikely to be the case in Mali alone. More generally, the issue of leadership and the place of elites in social movements and civil society organisations would appear to be highly significant in analysing their strategies and limitations (Morris and Staggenborg 2004).

New tensions appeared in the rural context when it was faced with a liberalising approach brought in by the democratic constitution of 1992 and international partners. The way it was interpreted by the rural inhabitants was not without its contradictions (Le Roy 1992, Fay 1995), and a number of ambiguities remain. Clientelism and corruption, which more often than not characterise the exercise of power in Africa, are modes of

political regulation that transcend the categories and lead to the conclusion that whoever is holding the reins of power – the state via its officials, peasants via their representatives, or even traders and the market – uses pretty much the same mechanisms. 'Civil society', far from being the revenge of African societies (Bayart 1983) or of its new elites, above all reorganised the dominant group, by the partial redistribution of the roles, especially given that those who had established the domain of civil society had more often than not come from that group. The diversification of vectors of access to the dominant pillars, which was no longer made up only of state and traders, far from ensuring better distribution of wealth, can be seen rather to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability of the power relations in Mali, which to a great extent 'digest' or absorb the processes initiated exogenously (such as privatisation, decentralisation, and civil society). Looking at the powers in Mali, the representation of peasant cotton growers would thus appear to be a new actor exploiting the fashion for participation in order to more successfully compete against the dominant powers.

Note on contributor

Alexis Roy is a doctoral candidate in Anthropology at the *Centre d'Études Africaines of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, Paris, and has been researching issues on and in Mali since 2003. His first study was on decentralisation in a rural commune, after which his research became more oriented towards the history of cotton-producers' unions and their industry, and now includes more general agricultural issues.

Notes

1. This article was translated for *ROAPE* from the original French text by Clare Smedley. Email: claresmedleytranslations@yahoo.co.uk
2. The Malian Company for the Development of Textiles (CMDT) belonged 60% to the Malian state and 40% to the French Company for the Development of Textiles (CFDT), the latter then concerned only with cotton cultivation. CFDT became Dagris, and then, following its privatisation under turbulent conditions in 2007, Géocoton. Its shares in CMDT have continued to fall in value as the business recapitalised, and have been reduced to a minimal percentage.
3. Fertilisers, biocides, and others.
4. Contrary to the belief of many, setting up a union was not formally banned under the law during the First and Second Republics, but did require authorisation to be obtained. Accordingly, the people behind SPCK tried to set up their union in the late 1980s and even went to court to pursue their right in late 1989 (Interview, Djanguina Tounkara, SPCK Secretary-General, April 2007).
5. *Comité de coordination des AV et tons*: *ton*, a Bambara term generally translated as 'association' or 'organisation', refers to a type of customary association in Mali that was reintroduced in the 1970s and 1980s.
6. The conflict in 1991 was sparked off by changes in the system for managing agricultural inputs, and resulted in a big rally of cotton producers in Cincina in 1991. This is considered to be the founding moment of the future SYCOV. It constituted a further victory for the producers, as the problem over agricultural inputs was resolved.
7. Between 1993 and 1998, SYCOV's main funders were the French Development Fund and International Solidarity's French Committee (to a total of 75% of the funding, with only 0.5% coming from their own funds). The World Bank funded a consultant to help SYCOV to negotiate a central contract on the purchase price of a kilogram of cotton (Docking 2002, pp. 6–8). The leaders of three of the cotton producers' unions confirmed to the researchers that they had not received regular foreign funding for several years.
8. SYPAMO formed following a split in SPCK during the discontent that followed the leadership clashes.
9. Djanguina Tounkara, Secretary-General of SPCK, April 2007.
10. The cotton industry comprised many businesses, including CMDT, *Huicoma*, which processed cottonseed into oil, soap and animal feed, the *Société malienne de produits chimiques* (SMPC) (the Malian Chemicals Company), which supplied fertiliser, and a textiles company that had

already been privatised. Subsequently SMPC went into voluntary liquidation, while *Huicoma* was privatised in 2005, and collapsed after being bought out by *Tomota*, who broke up the company. The future of the company remains very uncertain. The *Huicoma* workers have been occupying the Bamako labour exchange since November 2009, demanding the renationalisation of their business, the rehiring of those made redundant and the payment of salary arrears.

11. Before this, the *Association des organisations professionnelles paysannes* (AOPP) (the Association of Peasants' Professional Organisations) had begun a reconciliation process among the union officials and set up the 'group of 38', which brought together the members of SYCOV, SYVAC, SPCK and SYPAMO.

12. For example, 'CMDT's unpaid agricultural inputs: the false game played by the chair of APCAM' (Dicko 2007).

13. The issue of the number of levels in the umbrella structure delayed the process by several months, and the unions, who wanted to increase the number of posts, eventually succeeded in ensuring a committee at sector level, which had not originally been planned.

14. This was asserted in interviews during the research, and reported in the press (*Les Echos* 2007).

15. In 2004, 25% of cotton growers were farming an average area of six hectares, 55% farming three hectares and 20% farming one and a half hectares (Bélières 2009, p. 4). Another differentiating factor was access to agricultural tools (Nubukpo and Keïta 2005).

16. At the time of their advancement, Yaya Traoré and Bakary Togola both had a poor command of French, which perhaps in part explained why they had been supported by CMDT. The fact of being well educated, including in French, was clearly an important factor of social differentiation among the cotton producers and their representatives.

References

Amselle, J.-L., 1978. La conscience paysanne: la révolte de Ouolossébougou (Juin 1968, Mali). *Revue canadienne des études africaines*, 12 (3), 339–355.

Amselle, J.-L. and Benhamou, J., 1985. *Réactualisation de la filière coton au Mali (1984/1985)*. Paris: Mission d'évaluation du Ministère français des relations extérieures, coopération et développement.

Bayart, J.-F., 1983. La revanche des sociétés africaines. *Politique Africaine*, 11, 95–127.

Bayart, J.-F., 1989. *L'état en Afrique: la politique du ventre*. Paris: Fayard.

Bélières, J.-F., 2009. Intégrations des petits producteurs ouest africains au marché: quelques enseignements à partir de l'exemple de la filière coton au Mali. *In: African agriculture in the 21st century: meeting the challenges, making a sustainable green revolution*, conference, 9–10 February 2009, Windhoek. Windhoek: Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism and Division for Sustainable Development of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Berthomé, J., 2003. La confrontation des acteurs autour des enjeux de la filière coton au Mali. *In*: T. Dahou, R. Billaz and M. Totté, eds. *La décentralisation en Afrique de l'Ouest. Entre politique et développement*. Paris: Karthala, 299–315.

Bingen, R.J., 1996. Leaders, leadership, and democratization in West Africa: observation from the cotton farmers movement in Mali. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 13 (2), 24–31.

Chauveau, J.-P., 1994. Participation paysanne et populisme bureaucratique. *In*: J.-P. Jacob and P. Lavigne Delville, eds. *Les associations paysannes en Afrique, organisation et dynamiques*. Paris: Apad, Karthala, 25–60.

Dicko, A., 2007. Intrants impayés à la CMDT: le faux jeux du président de l'APCAM. *Les Echos*, Bamako, 25 January, 4.

Diop, C.A, 1981. *Civilisation ou barbarie*. Paris: Présence Africaine.

Docking, T.W., 1999. *International influence on civil society in Mali: the case of the cotton farmers' union, SYCOV*, Thesis (PhD). University of Boston.

Docking, T.W., 2002. L'influence étrangère sur le Sycov. *Actualité de la recherche au Mali*. 5 février. Bamako: IRD.

Les Echos, 2007. Pour avoir mis en place la FNA-USCPC Bakary Togola « emprisonne » Tahirou Bamba, 23 May, 6.

Fay, C., 1995. La démocratie au Mali, ou le pouvoir en pâture. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 35 (137), Paris, 19–53.

Gorieux, L., 2003. *Réformes des filières cotonnières en Afrique subsaharienne*. Paris: Ministère français des Affaires Étrangères, World Bank.

Isaacman, A., 1990. Peasants and rural protest in Africa. *African Studies Review*, 33 (2), 1–120.

Jacquemot, P., ed., 1981. *Mali, le paysan et l'état*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Le Roy, E., 1992. Mali: la troisième République face à la méfiance des ruraux. *Politique Africaine*, 46, 138–142.

Médard, J.-F., ed., 1991. *États d'Afrique noire: formations, mécanismes et crises*. Paris: Karthala.

Mission de Restructuration du Secteur Coton (MRSC), 2001. *Document de synthèse des États généraux du secteur coton*. Avril. Bamako: MRSC.

Mission de Restructuration du Secteur Coton (MRSC), 2005. *Mission de clarification et de recadrage du processus de réforme du secteur coton*. Bamako: Primature.

Morris, A.D. and Staggenborg, S., 2004. Leadership in social movements. *In*: D. Snow, S.A. Soule and H. Kriesi, eds. *The Blackwell companion to social movements*. Oxford: Blackwell, 171–196.

de Noray, S., Dia, A., Touré, B., and Traoré, A., 2007. *Rapport d'évaluation du PASE*. Bamako: PASE.

Nubukpo, K. and Keïta, M.S., 2005. Réforme du mécanisme de fixation du prix d'achat du coton au producteur malien et conséquences dans un contexte de chute des cours mondiaux. *In*: E. Hazard, ed. *Le livre blanc sur le coton*. Dakar: Enda, 117–131.

Roberts, L.R., 1996. *Two worlds of cotton: colonialism and the regional economy in the French Sudan, 1800–1946*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Claiming workers' rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo: the case of the *Collectif des ex-agents de la Gécamines*[1]

Benjamin Rubbers*

Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale et Culturelle (LASC), Institut des Sciences Humaines et Sociales, Université de Liège, Liege, Belgium

Within the context of its strategy for the reform of public companies in Africa, the World Bank became involved in redundancies of questionable legality. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, the Bank arranged and financed a voluntary severance programme in 2003, whereby 10,000 employees of the mining company Gécamines, some 45% of its workforce, left in return for an arbitrarily fixed lump-sum payment. Based on ethnographic research, this paper discusses the history of the protest movement which emerged from this mass redundancy programme, the arguments deployed by the movement and the resources available to it. On the basis of this case study, the paper goes on to offer some thoughts on the conditions for social criticism in a transitional regime, heir to an authoritarian tradition of long standing, and operating under the tutelage of foreign donors.

Keywords: resistance; working class; social movement; moral economy; social rights; Democratic Republic of Congo

Introduction

Under the aegis of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, a wave of privatisations has taken place among public and semi-public companies in Africa since the 1990s. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the opportunity to implement this type of reform first appeared, after many years of conflict, in the early 2000s. In their strategy for supporting the reconstruction of the DRC's economy, the international financial institutions (IFIs) put together a plan for restructuring public companies, beginning with the *Générale des carrières et des mines* (Gécamines). Founded in 1906, Gécamines – the former *Union minière du Haut-Katanga* (UMHK) – had for a century been the most important mining enterprise in DRC-Zaïre, and the main source of income and currency for the state. But, for a variety of reasons, the business went into a steep decline during the 1990s (Rubbers 2006). To address the situation, the World Bank advocated the sale of company assets to foreign private investors and staff reductions to improve its competitiveness.[2]

Opération Départ Volontaire (ODV) (Operation Voluntary Departures) was implemented against this background. With the financial and logistical support of the World Bank, the scheme offered voluntary redundancy to 10,000 Gécamines employees, some 45% of the total workforce, in return for a lump-sum severance payment which fell below the legal minimum. The ODV was exceptional in two respects, first because

*Email: brubbers@ulg.ac.be

of the number of workers involved, and second because it was an unprecedented move for the World Bank. The Bank does not normally finance projects in their entirety, or intervene directly in redundancy programmes – and this was in all likelihood one at odds with Congolese employment law. However, the ODV has also been used as a test case for similar projects. Since Gécamines, the same operational approach has been used to cut staff numbers in five other Congolese public enterprises carrying budget deficits. And it is not impossible that it will in future be applied elsewhere in Africa.

Based on ethnographic research,[3] this paper discusses the movement which arose out of the redundancy programme to denounce its terms and demand more adequate compensation for the workers involved. What resources are available to such a collective action operating in a social milieu long characterised by paternalism? What are the best means of conducting a struggle of this type in a precarious economic and political environment? In answering these questions, this paper will first discuss the action taken by the *Collectif des ex-agents de la Gécamines* (Collective of Former Gécamines Employees). It will then attempt to distinguish the moral economy underlying the demands made by the *Collectif*, and to specify the conditions under which its representatives negotiated with the authorities in Kinshasa. In conclusion, it will discuss the significance of this social protest in the context of Congolese politics.

The history of the claim

After severing relations with the Mobutu regime in the early 1990s, the World Bank re-engaged with the DRC in 2001 when Joseph Kabila came to power.[4] The Bank's renewed engagement with this heavily indebted country was marked by a sense of urgency. It was justified by the need to support first the peace process and then, after the establishment of the transitional government in April 2003, the reconstruction of the national economy (De Villers 2009a, pp. 43–53). The liberalisation of the mining sector – its decline blamed on 'poor governance' on the part of political elites – was central to the strategy devised by World Bank economists (Mazalto 2009). This strategy was designed to attract foreign private investors to the sector by promulgating new legal codes, parcelling out mining lands, and selling concessions on attractive terms. Particular interest was shown in the enormous reserves of copper and cobalt in the sub-soil of Katanga, situated for the most part in the concession held by the state-owned Gécamines. In 2002, the company was producing only 19,000 tonnes of copper and 1800 tonnes of cobalt, compared to 476,000 tonnes of copper and 14,000 tonnes of cobalt in 1986. It also had liabilities of US$1.3 billion, including at least US$100,000 owed to its 23,730 workers, each due on average 21 months in wage arrears.

The principal objective of the reform programme was to strip Gécamines of part of its deposits, allowing these to be leased to private investors or exploited through joint ventures. However, the implementation of this scheme by Congolese officials was the subject of criticism from various international organisations (Fatal Transactions 2006, Global Witness 2006). Far from the tests of transparency and competition promised by the World Bank, it resulted in a bout of asset stripping which imperilled any hope of recovery. The reform programme also envisaged the restructuring of Gécamines to give the company a chance to start again from a new base. *Opération Départ Volontaire*, aiming to cut 10,000 members of staff, was conceived against this background.

Even without taking into account the benefits in kind payable to the workers, the cost of this staff reduction exercise was estimated by the World Bank at US$120 million, far in excess of the budget earmarked within the framework of the Economic Recovery Credit

allocated to the DRC. The Bank then offered a budget of US$25 million specifically to fund the ODV, an offer rejected by the trade unions representing Gécamines' workers. Having obtained another US$18.5 million from the World Bank in additional aid, the DRC government called in an international consultant, Jacques Catry, to negotiate with the unions. Agreement was reached in March 2003: voluntary redundancy would be available to all employees with more than 25 years service on 31 December 2002. In return for accepting the termination of their contract of employment 'by mutual agreement', all those who took redundancy would receive 'in full settlement' a lump sum lower than the legal minimum.

The redundancy programme ran from March 2003 to February 2004. It was a resounding success with employees, the majority of whom had not been paid since October 2001 and who were by then owed on average 36 months in wage arrears; many who failed to meet the conditions nevertheless volunteered for the scheme. A total of 10,655 employees were made redundant: workers received between US$2,000 and US$4,000, managers between US$8,000 and US$15,000, and directors between US$20,000 and US$70,000. Implementation of the programme was entrusted to a government agency, the *Unité de Coordination de la réinsertion au Katanga* (URK). The URK began by launching an information campaign to explain to those volunteering for redundancy how the ODV would work, and to provide details of the different retraining opportunities available to them. Between August 2003 and February 2004, it arranged the termination of workers' contracts and made payments into a private bank for each employee. Finally, it set up a programme to support 'economic reintegration' of the retrenched workers, providing training and handing out financial assistance to selected collective projects.

At the end of the ODV, the World Bank, Gécamines and the URK all gave the programme a positive assessment: the budget had been spent, the timetable respected, and the ex-Gécamines staff had received their money. The majority of former employees had found new employment in agriculture; others had obtained work in the transport, retail and service sectors. With their technical background, a few had been able to find new jobs in privately owned mining enterprises, although generally at a wage below that on offer during the good times at Gécamines. The URK even produced newspaper articles and television reports demonstrating the ODV's success. To show that the scheme was trustworthy, these featured appearances by former employees expressing their happiness with the outcome, before highlighting some model retraining projects, in general those set up by managers and directors. The message was a simple one: it was entirely possible for ex-Gécamines staff to free themselves from a wage dependency sustained by a century of paternalism. They could now be self-reliant, and perhaps even start up small businesses. At the same time, however, a huge protest movement was developing, to denounce the terms of the ODV.

The *Collectif des ex-agents de la Gécamines* was in fact created as soon as the ODV came to an end in March 2004, its purpose being to demand payment in full of all wage arrears and other benefits in kind. The men behind it were two former directors of Gécamines in Lubumbashi – a lawyer and a sociologist – who held an informal meeting in Kinshasa with the Congolese vice-president in charge of social and cultural affairs, Arthur Z'ahidi Ngoma, before making contact with colleagues in the various towns where Gécamines operated. The *Collectif* quickly developed an organisational structure, with a coordinating committee in Lubumbashi, one committee for each of the three geographically defined groups within Gécamines, and branch officers for each district. Each group committee met once a week to keep former employees within each district informed about the decisions taken and results achieved. These meetings were open to all who wished to attend. At Lubumbashi and Kolwezi, these meetings have even been held in an open-air stadium,

allowing local residents to fill the terraces. Thanks to its open organisational structure, the *Collectif* can boast that it represents all 10,000 former employees.

Being an informal organisation, the *Collectif* sought the help of two trade unions, *Nouvelle dynamique syndicale* (NDS) and *Force syndicale des mineurs* (FOSYMINE), to act as its official representatives. Together, the unions and the *Collectif* organised demonstrations in Katanga, lobbied the authorities in Kinshasa and requested support from various European organisations. After meeting officials from the *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo* (MONUC) and the *Comité international d'accompagnement de la transition* (CIAT), the leaders of the *Collectif* and representatives of the two trade unions were received by the principal private secretary to the Congolese president, who passed their case on to Vice-President Z'ahidi Ngoma. A long process of dialogue and consultation followed, chaired by the vice-president and the minister of labour. In August 2005, the *Inspecteur Général du Travail* appointed to investigate the dispute delivered his verdict in favour of the *Collectif*: the government would have to pay all monies due to the former Gécamines employees, an estimated US$200 million plus interest accrued at 10%. All that remained was for Vice-President Z'ahidi Ngoma to come up with a viable way of financing the deal, allowing the bankrupt government to free up the budget required, and to persuade Gécamines to calculate the final reckoning due to each ex-employee.

This first victory was followed by a long wait, which ended with no concrete result. According to one representative of the *Collectif*, Vice-President Z'ahidi Ngoma had finally ordered Gécamines to pay its ex-staff a few days before the transitional regime ended in November 2006, but the company denied all responsibility for the ODV. The whole negotiation process therefore had to start again. However, approaches made to the incoming government (2006 to present) quickly bore fruit, with the new regime taking up the case scarcely three months after its arrival in office. The new government acknowledged the illegality of the ODV and decided to appoint a commission to calculate the exact amount payable to the ex-Gécamines staff: the sum previously suggested by the *Inspecteur Général du Travail* (US$200 million) had been based solely on an approximate figure provided by the *Collectif*.

Despite protests, letters to the authorities and petitions to the president, this commission never met. A year and half later, the minister of labour replaced it with a broader national body, the *Cadre permanent du dialogue social* (CPDS), which was established to give recommendations regarding all the social conflicts inherited from the Mobutu regime.[5] The seventh recommendation of the CPDS re-emphasised the legitimacy of the struggle waged by the *Collectif*, and the necessity of finding the money needed to pay what was owed, but without fixing an exact amount. The determination of the new government to find a solution to the Gécamines affair was welcomed as a second victory, but it was also perceived a way of playing for time. The government intended to resolve this case along with those of teachers' salaries, the final reckoning due to ex-employees of the nationalised banks, and a civil service pension deal. Money would therefore have to be found to meet all these demands, one after the other.

A solution to this financial problem was put forward by representatives of two nongovernmental organisations, *Sherpa-Belgique* and *Comité pour l'annulation de la dette du tiers monde (CADTM-Belgique)*, during a visit in October 2008.[6] They suggested that the leaders of the *Collectif* should put their case before the Inspection Panel of the World Bank. In their view, there were grounds for a challenge: in implementing the ODV, the Bank had flouted its own rules and procedures, which stipulate that it that must always respect the laws of any country in which it intervenes. The leaders of the *Collectif* initially

rejected this path, and the technical assistance offered by the two Belgian associations. Having spent the preceding four years following a strategy of political conciliation, they were afraid that the Congolese authorities would lose interest in their case if they approached the World Bank instead.

Despite the disapproval of the *Collectif*, a member of its Central (Likasi) Group Committee went ahead in an individual capacity and contacted the two Belgian associations. They helped him to establish another organisation, the *Association de défense des droits économiques et sociaux*, and to put together a 'Request for Inspection' to the World Bank. The Request was submitted at the beginning of 2009, first on an individual basis, and then by the Association. Fearful of losing all credibility, the president of the Central Group Committee then quickly followed this example. While the members of the coordinating committee and the trade union representatives associated with them continued their lobbying work in Kinshasa, the Central Group Committee became the principal interlocutor with the World Bank. In response to the Requests made, the Inspection Panel of the World Bank undertook a mission to Likasi in May 2009. Its report recognised the admissibility of the Requests and recommended that a socio-economic survey be commissioned.[7] A survey of 547 ex-Gécamines staff was undertaken in October 2009, which concluded that the living standards of these ex-workers had improved since implementation of the ODV.[8]

The Panel returned in January 2010, making further visits to the prime minister's office in Kinshasa and to the appellants in Katanga. The report of this mission, published in April, confirmed that the directors of the World Bank had established a framework for negotiations to find a solution to the conflict: it proposed that Gécamines should recognise its debts towards its former employees, and once again open up its schools and hospitals to them; in return, those former employees should also give up some of their demands.[9] However, given the 'complexity' of the case, no further action is envisaged before 2011.

A paternalistic moral economy

This section of the article examines the arguments utilised by the *Collectif* in its denunciation of the way in which the ODV operated. It disputed the voluntary nature of the programme, attributing its take-up to the poverty endured by the workers since 1998. At a time when Gécamines staff had received no wages for several months, they could not give up their jobs and take up other activities on the side without the risk of losing everything. Some had to sell their household goods and furniture, while others took out loans. Having taken their children out of school, many households had nothing else to eat but *bukari* (maize flour) and vegetables – and no longer once a day, but every other day. Some workers, unable to buy drugs and medicines, saw their children die of preventable illnesses during this period. Given these conditions, it is hardly surprising that all employees were quick to accept the lump sum offered by the ODV. In a memorandum sent by the *Collectif* to DRC President Joseph Kabila, it summarised the situation as follows: 'For us, it was take it or die, beggars can't be choosers.'[10] The decision to take 'voluntary' severance was determined by a whole range of material and familial constraints. It was not, as ODV procedures stipulated, the result of a choice freely taken and carefully considered. The memorandum continued: 'Is it possible to talk about voluntary severance when an employee is faced with a "life or death" dilemma, a superior power forcing him into a certain course of action, an overwhelming incentive, a state of extreme need?'

For the *Collectif*, the ODV was implemented under conditions which amounted to a conspiracy. According to this, those who took voluntary redundancy were the victims of a 'swindle' cooked up by particular leaders in Kinshasa and directors of Gécamines, who

first 'starved' the workers to force them into accepting a derisory pay-off and then embezzled the remaining money set aside for the ODV programme. A note sent by the *Collectif* to the Governor of Katanga suggested that the ODV was 'in reality nothing more than a conspiracy planned and implemented by certain sons of this country with the aim of filling their pockets at the expense of their fellow citizens'.[11] The origins of this theory lie in the confusion surrounding the exact size of the ODV budget, but it was also fuelled by suspicions of corruption hanging over both the union executive at Gécamines, which agreed to the ODV in 2003, and the URK, the government agency responsible for the programme of economic reintegration. Substance was added by the sudden death of World Bank consultant Catry after the ODV had ended. One leader of the Collectif interprets Catry's death as an assassination designed to conceal the colossal misappropriation of funds by the authorities in Kinshasa, with the ex-Gécamines workers bearing the brunt. Finally, one member of the coordinating committee claims to have been visited in 2005 by armed men 'with orders to kill', as a result of which he sent his family to safety in South Africa.

The *Collectif* now refuses to use the words 'voluntary severance' to describe something which in legal terms was a 'mass redundancy'. These legal terms are important to the *Collectif* because its principal argument is that the ODV has made a mockery of Congolese law. Indeed, the *Collectif* draws on several bodies of rules, not simply to provide authority for its claims,[12] but also to denounce ODV procedures, in particular the calculation of the severance payment. Correspondence addressed by the *Collectif* to the authorities in Kinshasa and to World Bank representatives makes frequent reference to articles within agreements signed between Gécamines and the trade unions or within the Congolese labour code. In so doing, the *Collectif* is attempting to remind the government and the World Bank of their declared mission, that of bringing the 'rule of law' to the DRC. This is a magical incantation regularly adopted by the *Collectif* in its letters and petitions, as for example in this letter to President Kabila in 2008:

> By deciding in favour of the 10,655 employees made redundant improperly and en masse, you proved … that the rule of law hoped for by the Congolese and supported by them in their overwhelming vote for you in 2006 is in the process of becoming a reality in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (Note of support and thanks from the *Collectif* to His Excellency, the President of the Republic, 12 September 2008, unpublished. Translated from the original French.)

In addition, the programme of 'economic reintegration' of ex-Gécamines staff has been deemed a failure. As far as the *Collectif* is concerned, the tragic outcome of this process was predetermined from the outset by the pre-existing poverty of its members, in that people first used their money to clear their debts, buy new furniture and household goods, and send their children back to school. But it was made worse by the insufficiency of the lump sum received and by problems with the reintegration programme. In this regard, the *Collectif* complains that training and financial assistance project applications suffered from an obscure, arbitrary and clientelist selection process, long delays in dealing with individual cases and unlocking start-up funding, and inadequate technical assistance. The programme would in the end have benefited no more than a handful of people who, in the majority of cases, did not immediately pursue their new occupation.

Whatever the opinion of World Bank experts, the demands made by the *Collectif* cannot simply be reduced to their monetary dimension. The readiness of all ex-Gecamines staff to support the demands needs also to be understood in terms of moral economy as propounded by Thompson (1971) and Scott (1976). These demands exist within a discourse that denounces the breakdown of the reciprocal relationship which formerly united the public enterprise and its workers. In their letters and speeches, the leaders of the *Collectif*

invoke the acknowledgement of the services rendered by its members to the state. Throughout their working lives, they contributed to the economic development and international prestige of their country. Their 'reward' was to be dismissed in violation of their rights, and deprived of the paternalistic support (school, hospital, and so on) previously provided by their employer. They believe that their offering to the nation ought to inspire respect; instead it has been forgotten and disdained by the supervisory authorities. This is exemplified in a speech given by the President of the Central (Likasi) Group Committee to Likasi's Mayor:

> These men and women who today, Friday 9 November 2007, stand before you in protest are ex-Gécamines employees who have sacrificed 30 to 50 years of life and hard labour to the development of this country. As champion producer of copper and cobalt, they have raised high the flag of the Democratic Republic of Congo across the whole world. These men and women are also champions; they should be seen as a model of the way we value work and receive the respect and recognition they deserve. But, here in the DRC, they are forgotten, bruised and condemned to die a slow death, surrounded by the total indifference of the very people who should be guaranteeing them a level of social protection appropriate to the services they have rendered the nation.[13]

Although the paternalistic model invoked by the ex-Gécamines staff had not been fully in existence for a decade or so, it continued to feed their expectations of their employer, especially as this model continued to enjoy the protection of a whole arsenal of laws and social agreements. It was redundancy that drove them to denounce their abandonment by the state: the redundancy programme had not been undertaken in accordance with the law and left the workers responsible for their own subsistence. To show the effects of redundancy, the *Collectif* asserted that poverty among ex-Gécamines personnel had increased enormously since the end of the ODV in 2004 – a view that was to be challenged by the conclusions of the World Bank's socioeconomic enquiry in 2009. Among the consequences of this pauperisation process, the *Collectif* identified malnutrition, divorce, withdrawal of children from school, delinquency among boys, girls forced into prostitution, and in particular increased rates of illness and death. Its group secretaries had the responsibility of announcing the number of deaths amongst their members on a weekly basis. Given the lack of statistics relating to the period before the ODV, it is difficult to evaluate the true meaning of these figures. Nevertheless, they cast a tragic light on the collective destiny of the ex-Gécamines staff, constantly compared by the *Collectif* to a slow death. It thus presents the ODV as a form of 'genocide' which calls for reparations: 'What hope exists for people who today are condemned to a collective suicide, planned and imposed upon them?' asked the Central (Likasi) Group in its Request to the World Bank.[14] The Group responds to its own rhetorical question as follows: 'Their hope lies in the settlement of the debt owing to them, acknowledged henceforth as real, payable in cash and now due.'

The abdication of the public authorities of their responsibilities has had another, indirect, effect: it makes it difficult for ex-Gécamines men to fulfil their role as husbands and fathers. Women no longer find them desirable husbands, capable of feeding their families and offering all the comforts of the 'modern' home. Papa André, whose first wife left him in 1993, described his experience of contemporary views on marriage:

> Really, love has little to do with marriage these days. Women only stay with you out of self-interest. 'You can't expect me to stay in conditions like these,' they say. 'Things were good when we started out.' Redundancy! *Oïe! Oïe!* Now the husband counts for nothing. He can't even get any respect at home. It's sad. It's a pity.

The paternal authority of these men, which in the past depended on the company (its pro-vision of wage, house, food and other things), has been weakened by their redundancy. During interviews and day-to-day conversations, they returned frequently to the difficulties they experience with their children – feeding them, getting them medical treatment, and sending them to school – and thus in gaining their respect. Papa Marco, father of nine chil-dren, remembers what life was like at home after the ODV, and before he found a job with an Indian company:

> You're the parents and you can't keep control over your children any more. If a child is sent out to forage for things, he gets cocky. And you, the parent, you can't tell him what to do any more because you're a complete failure. The child doesn't go to school, he has no one to keep him in check, but he's also getting by on his own. So he too becomes a master in the house. If he's the one putting food on the table and you tell him off, he'll say, 'Right, I'm off. And I'm taking my money with me.' What are you going to do? Nothing. So parents have to obey their children. Now it's the children who run the household.

This discourse regarding a lack of respect among the young has less to do with reality than with the feeling amongst redundant workers that they are powerless to fulfil the duties expected of a father within the established colonial model of the family (Rubbers 2007a, Kahola and Rubbers 2008). Men find themselves unable to exercise their prerogatives as *pater familias* in the choices made by their children, whether over the clothes they wear, study options, or sexual life. Added to these paternal feelings of shame and loss of control over their children, is the material impossibility of going out for a drink with their friends, taking a mistress, or helping out members of their extended family (parents and cousins, nephews and nieces). What they call into question therefore is the sense of the 'good life', indeed of life itself. Everything that made life worthwhile when they worked for Gécamines has been taken away. Maman Mukuba has nothing left to hope for, except perhaps to go abroad. As she explained to an official from the World Bank: 'Honestly, whoever came up with this voluntary severance scheme, I'm telling you, I can see what created Bin Laden. My mother is dead, my sisters are dead, I have nothing. I might as well do myself in and join them. Now, I am alone.' Far from being reducible to a simple rhetorical device, the language of death and suicide expresses a material and social experience historically created by the paternalistic policies of the company. Further-more, it demands political action just to enable people to go back to 'real' life, constituted as three meals a day, children at school, a television set in the living room, recognition within the family for their generosity, the possibility of an occasional beer, and so on.

In its interventions, the *Collectif* lays claim to its members' right to subsistence, to exer-cise one's duties as a father, and to live a 'good life' by invoking ideas of human dignity and the sanctity of human life. It suggests that the redundancy programme made a mockery of the absolute moral principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reducing ex-Gécamines employees to the status of things, of animals, or of slaves: 'You've treated us worse than dogs,' a representative of the *Collectif* called out to a World Bank official during a focus group held in September 2009. These comparisons reappear not only in the letters and speeches of the *Collectif*, but also during my discussions with residents in Panda. Papa Pontien:

> Lack of opportunity means that I've forgotten what it's like to go out, to enjoy myself, to cele-brate. Money plays a big part in human life, you see. And it's completely unbearable when you're condemned to live like a beggar, at least for any man worthy of the name. That's perhaps why some people would rather die than endure such humiliation ... Before, you

had some leisure, you could even arrange to go for a walk, you might even, say, do a bit of sightseeing. But now you're in jail. The first priority is to find something to eat, whatever its quantity or quality … You have to make do with what you can find. You're not even a man any more, because I know somewhere even animals in the bush can eat as much grass as they want. We've no idea what to do in this country today. It's a scandal. And I ask myself if the love preached in this world does exist … I don't know. It's a scandal.

Reference to human dignity, whether or not couched in the language of human rights, is not peculiar to the ex-Gécamines employees (Bourdieu 1962, p. 330). It seems widely evident in the works of authors studying social movements in Europe and America (Cefaï 2007, p. 496, Tilly and Tarrow 2008, p. 27). This may constitute a universal register of language, common at least to those societies which draw a clear distinction between humans and non-humans (Descola 2005). It is nevertheless important to consider how this discourse may have been adapted to the African context. As Pommerolle (2005, p. 215) reminds us when discussing the use of 'human rights' in Kenya and Cameroon: 'if the universal is an accepted resource, it presents itself in a variety of forms according to pre-existing elements of language.' Given its religious connotations and its prevalence in the Gécamines camps, it might be suggested that in this context the concept has an affinity with the *Jamaa* theology of Father Placide Tempels, who exercised widespread influence over the generation of employees including those affected by the ODV.[15] As Fabian suggests in a work dedicated to this Catholic movement (1971, pp. 9–10): 'The core of his message was the idea of the human dignity of adult and free Christians, symbolised in the concept of *umuntu* ("being man").'

Faced with the accusations made by the *Collectif*, the board of the World Bank defends the legality of the ODV, while emphasising the necessity for further root-and-branch reform of Congolese social legislation, still overly tinged with paternalism.[16] The Bank also wishes to reposition the redundancy programme within a broader historical and moral framework, that of economic development and rebuilding peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to the Bank, responsibility for the current situation of the ex-Gécamines employees lies above all with the company's previous management failings, its paternalistic policies, and the advanced age of those who took redundancy. Within this context, it deems its reintegration programme, as defined in its own narrow terms, a success: most people have managed to find a new occupation which permits them to survive. The most the Bank is prepared to concede is that the project of turning workers into businesspeople was illusory. Nevertheless, the ODV has fulfilled its primary objective, that of reducing staff numbers at Gécamines. The fate of former employees of the company thus appears as nothing more than collateral damage, unfortunate but essential, within a larger project of economic regeneration.

Mobilisation and representation

The demands made by the *Collectif* render explicit a regime of largely implicit expectations drawn from past relational experience (Siméant 2010). As such, they are the subject of consensus among ex-Gécamines staff, demonstrated in interviews and discussions with residents in Panda. The only criticisms of its campaign came from former employees happy with their earnings in their new occupation who made fun of the passivity of 'those who wait without doing anything'. Such comments reflect the values – increasingly normalised in the towns of Haut-Katanga – of fending for oneself (Petit and Mulumbwa 2005). They do not however question the overall legitimacy of the campaign waged by the *Collectif*: the moral economy of paternalism remains relevant to the demands they make of their former employer.[17]

This consensus presupposes the pre-existence of an imagined community (Anderson 1996 [1983], pp. 19–20). The protest would have been unable to unite all ex-employees, and achieve such a scale over a long period, without the already established social and identity framework provided by membership of the Gécamines staff. Although many structural factors divide this community (hierarchical, institutional, geographic, and so on), it is also underwritten by social networks which, taken together, embrace all employees. These were the networks mobilised to form the *Collectif* in February 2004. An effort of this kind would have been difficult, not to say impossible, without the shared identification with a single social group, that of Gécamines employees affected by the ODV.

The formation of this Gécamines worker community derived largely from the paternalistic policies practised by the employer, first the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* (UMHK) and later Gécamines, from the late 1920s onwards. UMHK developed a vast network of infrastructure and institutions designed to control all aspects of the life of employees and their immediate family: marriage, housing, food distribution, schooling, family medical care, leisure opportunities and so on (Mottoulle 1946, Fetter 1973). The company also systematically encouraged its workers to mix with colleagues of different 'tribal' origins, thus earning it the nickname *Changa changa* (*ku-changa* means 'bring together'). The construction of this biopolitical edifice – designed to control the workforce, increase its productivity and ensure that it reproduced itself from generation to generation – was accompanied by a paternalistic rhetoric which characterised workers as the 'children of the *Union Minière*' (Dibwe dia Mwembu 2001, pp. 45–118). This sense of family was transmitted through schools and churches, but also through the radio and the company newspaper *Mwana Shaba*.

Employees felt they belonged to a fixed social group that was protected and privileged within the working population of Haut-Katanga (Mwabila 1979). Many factors helped to forge this sense of belonging: community life in the different spaces offered by the company (work, circle, camp, and others); support for the symbols defining the 'family of the *Union Minière*' (uniforms, songs, 'copper-eaters' day', and so on); and the hierarchical and geographical mobility of workers within the same institutional network (class, works, groups, and others). From the 1980s, however, this 'labour aristocracy' experienced a serious deterioration in its living conditions, with rising inflation, irregularly paid wages and the abolition of several types of benefit in kind (Dibwe dia Mwembu 2001, pp. 157–195). Indeed, by 2003, the standard of living of Gécamines employees was found to have fallen below that of the urban population of Haut-Katanga as a whole.[18] But this descent did not destroy the collective identity of workers, who continued to refer to what was the Gécamines family. Their recent experience has instead recast that family as a community with a shared fate, a redefinition of the membership group that was essential to the creation of the *Collectif*.

The historicity of the worker community at Gécamines should not be allowed to obscure the significance of the continuous mobilisation work undertaken by the *Collectif* and its leaders during the six years of their protest. They first had to establish their unity by overcoming social and regional divisions amongst the former employees. Although the *Collectif* is run by former managers, the social distance between manager and worker is constantly downplayed during meetings and assemblies by reference to a single 'us', that is, all those who accepted voluntary severance. 'Monsieur' or 'Papa' have replaced forms of address previously used at Gécamines, such as *Chef* or *Ingénieur*. The sometimes critical advice of former workers and labourers is listened to with deference. The extent of the privileges once enjoyed by managers, and the larger lump sums they received through the ODV, is consistently underplayed to emphasise the tragedy of the shared fate of all ex-Gécamines staff. Meanwhile, the regional split between Katangese people and Kasaïans is the

subject of a deliberate public silence, in stark contrast with the bitterness it engenders during private conversations. Indeed, the terms *Katangais* and *Kasaïen*, which became very sensitive during the expulsion of Kasaïans in 1992/93,[19] were never used in public meetings of the *Collectif* attended during the research.

The mobilisation work of the *Collectif* also involves the repetition at each meeting of a litany of suffering endured, rights scorned, and actions taken with the authorities. The *Collectif* has to maintain interest among its members by provoking their sense of injustice and involving them in its actions. Repeating the same lines week after week eventually makes members weary: 'It's always the same old thing!', one manager whispered to me as we left a meeting of the Central (Likasi) Group. To prevent discouragement, the *Collectif* resorts to a more or less subtle manipulation of information, leading members to believe that victory is imminent. After the vice-president's favourable reaction in 2005, after the seventh recommendation of the CPDS in 2008, and after the visit of the panel of World Bank experts in 2009, the leaders expressed the hope, without providing any guarantees, that the workers would be paid in the near future. Similarly, the leaders of the *Collectif* seek to maintain morale by claiming the receipt of material and/or moral support from abroad.[20]

In agitating for their rights, the former employees can no longer exert pressure by striking, as they could when they worked at Gécamines. They have therefore been forced to turn to a new 'repertoire of representation': rallies, protests, group petitions, and lobbying the authorities (Tilly and Tarrow 2008). What would previously have been considered a social protest, internal to the machinery of state, thus acquired a truly political character. However, the collective action undertaken by ex-Gécamines staff continues to be based explicitly on a strategy of conciliation, with both the state and the World Bank. In a country run since the colonial period by a succession of authoritarian regimes, this strategy forms part of a long tradition of negotiating with the powers that be. This is not to ignore the many strikes and acts of worker resistance evident under different regimes (Higginson 1989). However, it remains true that most of the demands made were dealt with in an institutional framework, and not as a result of open confrontation in the public space.[21]

This public protest has been conducted since 2004 within a political space controlled by competing factions and dominated by the international authorities. Even the Joseph Kabila government, itself the product of a process of elite co-optation, has not wholly eradicated former divisions. The government also continues to instrumentalise its dependency on foreign powers (Bayart 1989, 1999, De Villers 2009b). Confronted with what Callaghy *et al.* (2001) call a 'transboundary political formation', the *Collectif* has found it difficult to establish clear lines of accountability for the ODV. At the outset, it pinned responsibility on Gécamines, but the company was referred them back to the state. The *Collectif* then went directly to the foreign donors, MONUC and CIAT. Directed back again to the national authorities, it expressed its grievances to the president, the vice-president, various ministers, and the provincial authorities in Katanga. Today, the leaders of the *Collectif* are conducting their campaign on two fronts, negotiating directly with the authorities in Kinshasa on one hand, and with representatives of the World Bank on the other. In attributing responsibility for the ODV, their discourse increasingly encompasses the whole of the 'transboundary political formation'.

Independent of the need to establish accountability, the *Collectif* faces the complicated task of identifying interlocutors within this political environment who are capable of pursuing its demands. It has despatched letters and petitions to all the bodies mentioned above, in the hope that at least one of them will heed its voice. At the same time, its leaders have been careful to remain outside factional struggles to avoid linking themselves to a patron with an uncertain political future. Thus, they avoided becoming publicly linked to any single party during the 2006 elections, even while officially supporting Kabila's candidature.

Conclusion

The *Collectif* makes explicit a paternalistic moral economy which draws on the colonial heritage of Katanga but which uses a new language – the language of the law. What is the impact of this collective action within the political context of the Democratic Republic of Congo? The conditions might be considered ripe for the emergence of a social movement. Even if the *Collectif* is playing the conciliation card with the current regime, it is still taking care to guard its political autonomy. Although one cannot speak of 'class consciousness' in this context,[22] the former employees of other public enterprises undoubtedly share the same values as the *Collectif* and are likely to develop campaigns based on the same corpus of law. More generally, the *Collectif* draws on the sympathy of retirees abandoned to their fate, of unpaid officials and poorly paid workers – that whole mass of 'the discarded', who willingly characterise themselves as such in comparison to the '*grands*' (*bakubwa*). In contrast to observations made by Larmer (2005) with regard to Zambia, the defence of paternalism mounted by the *Collectif* has not, however, led to explicit criticism of neoliberal reforms implemented by the international financial institutions. There is also no form of dialogue between the former employees of different public enterprises; each group has its own set of demands, as they seek to obtain what is due to them. It was in fact their interlocutors, the Congolese government and the World Bank, which sought to deal with their claims together. The common space that this provides has not yet led to the development of a common political agenda; it is therefore too soon to talk of a social movement.

Nevertheless, the collective action undertaken by the ex-Gécamines staff certainly forms part of a more general process of political change. According to the interpretation suggested by Young (2004), the 'democratic transition' of the 1990s ushered in a new era for Africa, representing a partial break with its colonial inheritance. This new era was characterised by an emergent space for political expression where a critique of power could be articulated using the language of the law. It appears that the public protest movement represented by the *Collectif* was made possible by the political liberalisation of the 1990s. Although this did not result in a process of democratisation, it nevertheless allowed people to openly criticise those in power, both on the street and in the press (Lafargue 1996, pp. 16–17, Quantin 1997, p. 14). With the end of the regime of Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the *Collectif* moved cautiously into this discursive space to claim its rights. In a semi-authoritarian polity, those in power at different levels of the state had to consider the demands made by the *Collectif*, and in so doing give them a degree of publicity and legitimacy. Some politicians appealed to the leaders of the *Collectif* to stand for their party in the elections; others adopted its demands in the hope of benefiting from the support of its members. Although opportunistic, it is this populist strategy which has allowed the fight of the ex-Gécamines staff to be linked with that of other public employees and so brought the broader problem of workers' rights into the public space (Larmer and Fraser 2007).

The most important characteristic of the action taken by the *Collectif* is that it has based its underlying argument on a group of national and international laws. This recourse to the law did not constitute a legal strategy, operating through tribunals. Instead it formed part of a political strategy, designed to remind actors within the political formation of the imperative nature of the rule of law (Hansen and Stepputat 2001). To adopt the terms of Bayart (1992, pp. 89–90), the *Collectif* constructed a language to fight the state on its own terrain. But the *Collectif* also mobilises this language in its relations with international donors, to force them to exert pressure on the government, or on themselves to respect national laws. How far may such a law-based discourse be capable of encouraging the formation of a protest movement in the DRC? Bodies which articulate this discourse, such as the *Collectif*, do not yet demonstrate the solidarity needed to unite in a social movement

capable of representing a threat to authority. The language of the law is also sufficiently flexible, multi-faceted and ambiguous to be subverted by government officials in their interaction with those who make use of it in the field (Rubbers 2007b). However, the imagined state associated with that language attacks the very foundations of the Democratic Republic of Congo as a state. It therefore exerts a diffuse influence on the way donors, political actors, and 'civil society' organisations assess the legitimate boundaries of state action.

Acknowledgements

Note on contributor

Benjamin Rubbers teaches at the University of Liege and at the Free University of Brussels. He has a doctorate in Anthropology, and has been conducting research in Katanga, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for 10 years.

Notes

1. This article was translated for *ROAPE* from the original French text by Margaret Sumner. Email: maggie.sumner@googlemail.com
2. In many respects, the path followed by Gécamines is similar to that taken by Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM). Independently of the mutual influences linking the two companies during the colonial period, ZCCM was, like Gécamines, the main economic resource of the post-independence Zambian state. With the fall in the price of copper, it later experienced a slow decline, to a point in the 1990s where the company was forced to sell off part of its assets to overseas companies (Craig 2001, Larmer 2005). A more in-depth comparison between the two companies in the present period would certainly be worthwhile (Hönke 2009).
3. This paper is based on four ethnographic study trips made to the company buildings in Panda (Likasi) in 2006 (one month), 2007 (two weeks), 2008 (one month) and 2009 (one month). During these trips, I attended meetings of the *Collectif*, questioned its members, and collected a large number of documents (reports, letters, and other materials). I also conducted more detailed interviews with 10 key witnesses, 50 managers and workers, and 10 children. Finally, I was able to develop a closer relationship with five residents of Panda, and to observe them, talk with them and accompany them about their everyday activities. Many names of interviewees have been changed to preserve their anonymity.
4. Laurent-Désiré Kabila was assassinated in mysterious circumstances on 16 January 2001. Ten days later his son, Joseph Kabila, took the oath of office as the new president of the Democratic Republic of Congo.
5. Final Report of the Extraordinary Session of the National General Assembly of the *Cadre permanent du dialogue social*, Kinshasa, 4 September 2008.
6. Sherpa is a body which provides legal help to fight attacks on human, social and environmental rights. Meanwhile the *Comité pour l'annulation de la dette du tiers monde* (CADTM) supports the emancipation of the 'popular forces' which fight neoliberal reforms in the countries of the South.
7. The Inspection Panel, *Report and Recommendation. Democratic Republic of Congo: Private Sector Development and Competitiveness Project (IDA Credit n° 3815 – DRC)*, Report n° 48634-ZR, 27 May 2009.
8. Cited in the Inspection Panel, *Second report and recommendation. Democratic Republic of Congo: private sector development and competitiveness project (IDA Credit n°3815 – DRC)*, Report n°53760-RZ, 5 April 2010, pp. 19–20.

9. This report treats the Gécamines case along with that of 3840 ex-employees of three former public banks. They were made redundant in 2003, in the same way as the Gécamines staff and on the same budget. The bank staff placed their Request before the World Bank in December 2009.

10. Memorandum of the Former Gécamines Employees affected by *Opération Départ Volontaire* sent to the President of the DRC, 2 March 2004, pp. 2–3 (translated from original French).

11. Note sent by the *Collectif* to the Governor of Katanga, 20 June 2008, p. 2 (translated from original French).

12. This represents an attempt to avoid the risk of suppression, perceived as real since the experience of the *Bundu dia Kongo* movement in the province of Bas-Congo in 2006 and 2008.

13. Remarks addressed to Madame the Mayor of Likasi, on the occasion of the deposit of the Memorandum of the Former Gécamines Employees to the President of the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 9 November 2007.

14. Request made by the *Collectif* to the Inspection Panel of the World Bank, letter of 19 February 2009, p. 4.

15. Well-known for his work *La philosophie bantoue*, the Franciscan missionary P. Tempels founded the *Jamaa* (meaning 'family' in Swahili) movement within the Congolese Catholic Church. The movement achieved considerable success in the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* (UMHK) camps around 1960. Today *Jamaa* coexists with other national and international movements of the same type (*Légionnaires, Renouveau charismatique*, and others). Together they play a pivotal role in sociability within the workers' camps.

16. Management Response to Request for Inspection Panel Review of the DRC Private Sector Development and Competitiveness Project (Credit n°. 3815-DRC), p. 29.

17. This discourse concerning self-reliance spread across the region during the 1990s, a long time after it became current in Kinshasa. But it did not replace the paternalistic model, which continues to shape the expectations of employees towards their employer, whether public or private. The paternalistic model continues to be supported by DRC social legislation, which is honoured by the big multinationals moving into the region, in some cases with enthusiasm. Providing for their employees in this way (houses, schools, health centres, and so on) allows these companies to maintain their reputation for social responsibility.

18. *The restructuring of Gécamines, impacts on poverty and social issues. The future of social services and reintegration strategies*, Final Report of the University of Lubumbashi, 26 July 2005, pp. 8–20.

19. In 1992/93, the governor of Katanga, G. Kyungu Wa Ku Mwanza, delivered a series of speeches accusing the 'Kasaïans' of robbing the province of its resources at the expense of its 'original inhabitants'. At the same time he mobilised young people in his party, the *Union des Fédéralistes et des Républicains Indépendants*, to rough up the Kasaïans and expel them from the province. The Gécamines company estates were particularly hard hit by this regionalist violence (Dibwe dia Mwembu 2001, pp. 201–232).

20. They were thus able to play on my presence to suggest that my research, although supposedly academic, could in fact be a discreet enquiry on behalf of the World Bank. When I first met the secretary general of the NDS in 2006, he took me to a meeting hall where more than 300 people had gathered for the weekly meeting of the *Collectif*. After offering me a chair on the dais, he introduced me in a speech in Swahili which I did not fully understand. All I can say for certain is that when I was later introduced to representatives of the *Collectif*, they did not hide their surprise at learning that I worked for a university, and not the World Bank. But this piece of deception did not prevent them in their turn from playing on the ambiguity surrounding my identity.

21. Indeed, the unions have never represented a real opposition force in the DRC (Corneille 1945, Poupart 1960, Banza undated).

22. As M. Mwabila remarked in 1979, professional identity is linked more closely to an enterprise than to consciousness of belonging to a working class.

References

Anderson, B., 1996 (1983). *L'imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalisme*. Paris: La Découverte.

Banza, T., undated. *L'unification du mouvement syndical en République Démocratique du Congo*. Bruxelles: De Clercq Monique.

Bayart, J.-F., 1989. *L'Etat en Afrique. La politique du ventre*. Paris: Fayard.

Bayart, J.-F., 1992. La revanche des sociétés africaines. *In*: J.-F. Bayart, A., Mbembe, and C. Toulabor, eds. *Le politique par le bas en Afrique noire. Contributions à une problématique de la démocratie*. Paris: Karthala, 65–106.

Bayart, J.-F., 1999. L'Afrique dans le monde: une histoire d'extraversion. *Critique internationale*, 5 (Autumn), 97–120.

Bourdieu, P., 1962. La hantise du chômage chez l'ouvrier algérien. Prolétariat et système colonial. *Sociologie du travail*, 4 (4), 313–331.

Callaghy, T., Kassimir, R., and Latham, R., 2001. Introduction: transboundary formations, intervention, order, and authority. *In*: T. Callaghy, R. Kassimir and R. Latham, eds. *Intervention and trans-nationalism in Africa: global–local networks of power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–20.

Cefaï, D., 2007. *Pourquoi se mobilise-t-on? Les théories de l'action collective*. Paris: La découverte.

Corneille, A., 1945. *Le syndicalisme au Katanga*. Elisabethville: Les éditions congolaises.

Craig, J., 2001. Putting privatisation into practice: the case of Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39 (3), 389–410.

Descola, P., 2005. *Par-delà nature et culture*. Paris: Gallimard.

De Villers, G., 2009a. République Démocratique du Congo. De la guerre aux élections. L'ascension de Joseph Kabila et la naissance de la Troisième République (janvier 2001–août 2008). *Cahiers africains*, 75. Paris: L'Harmattan.

De Villers, G., 2009b. Pouvoirs et impuissance d'un régime de semi-tutelle internationale. *In*: T. Tréfon, ed. *Réforme au Congo (RDC): attentes et désillusion. Cahiers africains*, 76, 231–242. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Dibwe dia Mwembu, D., 2001. *Bana Shaba abandonnés par leur père: structures de l'autorité et histoire sociale de la famille ouvrière au Katanga 1910–1997*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Fabian, J., 1971. *Jamaa. A charismatic movement in Katanga*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Fatal Transactions, 2006. *The state vs. the people. Governance, mining, and the transitional regime in the Democratic Republic of Congo* [online]. Available from http://www.fataltransactions.org/ Publications [Accessed on 16 August 2010].

Fetter, B., 1973. L'Union minière du Haut-Katanga, 1920–1940: la naissance d'une sous-culture totalitaire. *Cahiers du CEDAF*, 6, 1–68.

Global Witness, 2006. *Digging in corruption: fraud, abuse, and exploitation in Katanga's copper and cobalt mines* [online]. Available from http://www.globalwitness.org/media_library_detail.php/ 154/en/digging_in_corruption [Accessed on 16 August 2010].

Hansen, T.B. and Stepputat, F., 2001. Introduction. States of imagination. *In*: T.B. Hansen, and F. Stepputat, eds. *States of imagination: ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1–38.

Higginson, J., 1989. *A working class in the making. Belgian colonial labor policy, private enterprise, and the African mineworker, 1907–1951*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Hönke, J., 2009. Extractive orders: transnational mining companies in the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries in the Central African Copperbelt. *In*: R. Southall and H. Melber, eds. *A new scramble for Africa?* Durban: KwaZulu Natal Press, 274–298.

Kahola, O. and Rubbers, B., 2008. Entre collaboration et confrontation: l'ambivalence des rapports entre pouvoirs publics et enfants de la rue à Lubumbashi (RDC). *Autrepart*, 47 (3), 25–42.

Lafargue, J., 1996. *Contestations démocratiques en Afrique. Sociologie de la protestation au Kenya et en Zambie*. Paris: Karthala.

Larmer, M., 2005. Reaction and resistance to neo-liberalism in Zambia. *Review of African Political Economy*, 32 (103), 29–45.

Larmer, M. and Fraser, A., 2007. Of cabbages and King Cobra: populist politics and Zambia's 2006 election. *African Affairs*, 106 (425), 611–637.

Mazalto, M., 2009. De la réforme du secteur minier à celle de l'Etat. *In:* T. Tréfon, ed. *Réforme au Congo (RDC): attentes et désillusions. Cahiers africains*, 76, 171–189. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Mottoulle, L., 1946. Politique sociale de l'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga pour la main-d'œuvre indigène et ses résultats au cours de vingt années d'application. *Mémoire de l'Institut Royal Colonial Belge*, 14, 5–67.

Mwabila, M., 1979. *Travail et travailleurs au Zaïre. Essai sur la conscience ouvrière du prolétariat urbain de Lubumbashi*. Kinshasa: Presses Universitaires du Zaïre.

Petit, P. and Mulumbwa, G., 2005. «La crise». Lexicon and ethos of the second economy in Lubumbashi. *Africa*, 75 (4), 467–487.

Pommerolle, M.-E., 2005. *A quoi servent les droits de l'Homme? Action collective et changement politique au Kenya et au Cameroun*. Thesis (PhD). Université Montesquieu, Bordeaux IV.

Poupart, R., 1960. *Première esquisse de l'évolution du syndicalisme au Congo*. Université Libre de Bruxelles: Editions de l'Institut de Sociologie Solvay.

Quantin, P., 1997. Introduction. *In*: J.-P. Daloz and P. Quantin, eds. *Transitions démocratiques africaines. Dynamiques et contraintes (1990–1994)*. Paris: Karthala, 7–22.

Rubbers, B., 2006. L'effondrement de la Générale des Carrières et des Mines. Chronique d'un processus de privatisation informelle. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 181, 115–134.

Rubbers, B., 2007a. *La reconfiguration de l'enfance au Katanga*. Université de Lubumbashi: rapport de l'Observatoire du Changement Urbain.

Rubbers, B., 2007b. Retour sur le 'secteur informel'. L'économie du Katanga (Congo-Zaïre) face à la falsification de la loi. *Sociologie du travail*, 49 (3), 316–329.

Scott, J.C., 1976. *The moral economy of the peasant. Rebellion and subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Siméant, J., 2010. «Economie morale» et action collective dans les Afriques. Valeur heuristique et usages d'un concept. Recueil de communications du colloque *Lutter dans les Afriques. Université Paris 1*, 22–23 janvier. Notes distributed to conference participants (unpublished). 157–168.

Thompson, E.P., 1971. The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century. *Past and Present*, 50 (1), 76–136.

Tilly, C. and Tarrow, S., 2008. *Politique(s) du conflit. De la grève à la révolution*. Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.

Young, C., 2004. The end of the post-colonial state in Africa? Reflections on changing African political dynamics. *African Affairs*, 103 (410), 23–24.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

BRIEFING

The zombies of development economics: Dambisa Moyo's *Dead Aid* and the fictional African entrepreneurs

Toby Leon Moorsom*

Department of History, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

It shouldn't be surprising that zombies are ubiquitous in the culture of 2010.[1] Rather than producing any drastically new ideas to address the numerous forms of global crisis, the 'Empire of Capital' has continued to simply reproduce old ones. 'Hope' has been given a media-constructed package like never before with the coming of Obama, but we cannot go so far as to actually alter things. The solution to the problems we face is more of the same; greater freedoms for capital with more retrenchments for workers. That is all neoliberalism has ever offered since the victory of Friedman-inspired economics in the early 1970s, which then received renewed vigour when Jeffrey Sachs prescribed shock therapy on the Eastern European nations in the early 1990s. So upon our earth walk the half-dead: half-dead victims of half-dead ideas. In 2010 the prime-time zombies of development economics have seen Dambisa Moyo arise from the investment bank at the centre of the 2008 contagion. Backed with the United States' cutting-edge showmanship, Moyo can pronounce the end of aid amidst media swooning as she enjoys her €76 hotel breakfast (Edemariam 2009).

Moyo is the latest torchbearer for international bankers who are once again forwarding the old argument that Africa can develop so long as it manages to cultivate a modernising elite with the right entrepreneurial savvy. This time, however, it is not a British administrator or a Paris Club banker, but someone who challenges images of the evil coloniser. *Dead Aid* is a Goldman Sachs-inspired, rehashed argument that finances toward Africa should stop being given to governments via institutions like the World Bank, but instead should come from 'smart money' and be directed toward individuals. At best, the state can issue bonds to international investors that it can judge based on credit-rating agency assessments of whether countries are 'seriously intent on transforming their economies for the better' (Moyo 2009, p. 79). Her argument sits amidst a gutted version of history that omits the fundamental rationale behind post-independence economic policies in Africa, leaving only a parody of the past that includes a seriously inaccurate account of the economic history of her own country of Zambia. Moyo then describes fictionalised African entrepreneurs and actually uses a fictional country on which she can base her argument. These supposed entrepreneurs, Moyo claims, are being held back by an oppressive state and need the help of benign capital. Without scrutinising just what forms of capital and capitalists she is imagining, Moyo makes the mistake of conflating the existence of markets with capitalism. The result is an entirely unhelpful book barely worthy of academic debate.

*Email: 4tlm1@queensu.ca

The fact it has received more attention than any book on Africa in recent years says more about the nature of ideology than anything else.

The past Moyo omits

Not only is Moyo's argument ahistorical, my own research suggests that it is in fact contradicted by the experience of Zambia. I examine a previous development project that began in the colonial era and continued until the neoliberal transition of 1990. This project sought to build up an entrepreneurial elite among Tonga farmers in Southern Province. My data confirm many previous studies revealing that capitalist farmers were emerging only because of state support along with the help of international aid. Furthermore, my observations show that with the coming of neoliberalism and a reduction in aid, the accumulation of these farmers, and their potential to provide jobs, has largely been eradicated. The experience of indigenous capitalists in this climate no doubt varies depending on specificities of sector and a country's position in the broader global economy. However, the agricultural sector in Southern and Central Africa has not supported capitalist farmers without state involvement, regardless of whether they are settlers or indigenous Africans.

Tonga agropastoralists living on the plateau between Lusaka and Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia were part of a modern experiment, initiated under the British colonial administration, to create a capitalist class among farmers who had only recently adopted plough-based agriculture. After independence many of them moved on to the privately owned land originally set aside for white settlers.[2] I have been gathering oral histories from farmers and ranchers who were the recipients of these early development efforts and whose families came to produce significant surpluses: they were expanding, increasingly hiring off-farm labour and were influencing the political climate of the country. This has been shown in the PhD dissertations of at least five important scholars (Dixon-Fyle 1976, Baylies 1978, Vickery 1978, Momba 1982, Chipungu 1988). The desire to tap into the so-called 'traditional' sectors to bring out an acquiring class, to nurture an entrepreneurial ethos and promote indigenous investment in Africa, was therefore initially a colonial project. In the post-independence era it morphed into Modernisation theory with figures such as Arthur Lewis actually making the bridge (see e.g. Tignor 2006). The British looked to histories and social customs among particular ethnic groups, seen as malleable clay from which they could construct new beings, with interests in maintaining economic dimensions of empire while simultaneously providing a developmental urge within the country.

In most instances the expected timeline of independence was pushed forward by the disruptive actions of the colonised. Nevertheless, the transitions largely represented a changeover in the elite at a time when state planning was the norm. Moreover, as the Tanzanian scholar Issa Shivji explains, 'contrary to the current propaganda of the West, which disowns responsibility, it was their institution, the World Bank, that designed the post-independence economic programmes' (Shivji 2009, p. 5). These programmes were premised on the intensification of monoculture agriculture for export, the establishment of some enclaves of import-substitution industrialisation (ISI), and the 'throwing open [of] the doors for the multinationals to invest in extractive and resource based industries' (*Ibid.*). At the same time, ISI initiatives were financed by the calculated immiseration of the peasantry in an attempt to build up a modernising elite.[3]

This paradigm was, as Shivji also notes, challenged in some spaces by 'young academics coming out of post-independence universities'. Development for many was not 'looking for modernising elites, but

rather a process of class struggle', which sought fundamental transformations of the colonial societies (*Ibid.* p. 7). Yet as the state became a site of accumulation, any radical nationalists that came to power with alternative visions for transforming their societies were either taken out by military coups or assassinations, became compradors, or else they found pragmatic reasons to tolerate imperialism (*Ibid.* p. 8). In the first decade of independence many countries did, nevertheless, make some impressive achievements in social policy, creating health and education infrastructure that had never existed in the colonial era. This was of course achieved with loans, and eventually the oil crisis of the 1970s, with declining terms of trade and sky-rocketing interest rates following the Volcker shock,[4] compounded to bring on the 'lost decade' of the 1980s. As we know, the structural adjustment programmes were designed to dismantle what little had been built and put it in the hands of apparently better, more entrepreneurial, modernisers.[5]

A new knight for Sachs and Sachs

Moyo grew up in Zambia and is armed with a Harvard MA and an Oxford PhD in economics. She has worked as a consultant for the World Bank, followed by eight years at the investment firm Goldman Sachs – now famous for its role in the 2008 financial crisis, losing its status as an investment bank and then, after accepting $10 billion in a US federal bail-out, setting aside a reported $20 billion for employee bonuses (*Globe and Mail* 2009, *New York Times* 2009). The book has the stamp of approval of the likes of Steve Forbes and Kofi Annan, has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list and was launched with a high-profile publicity campaign that brought Moyo to media prominence virtually overnight.

Not surprisingly, given Moyo's credentials, the basic message in *Dead Aid* is that finances for Africa should stop being given

to governments via institutions like the World Bank, but instead should come from 'the hedge funds, the international banks [and] the private equity funds' (Moyo 2009, p. 153). She enthusiastically declares that 'Africa's era of private capital is only now beginning, and this trend has to be nurtured in order to continue' (*Ibid.*) Who are the targets of this financing? 'Entrepreneurs' that 'need a receptive and user-friendly environment within which to thrive' (*Ibid.*). It is a classic position in political economy whereby the natural tendencies of capital need to be massaged into being so they can take hold to then unleash their benevolent powers of progress. It is in some respects, as Hirschman (1977) explains, a process of trying to contain man's dangerous passions by allowing avarice to dominate. Greed may not be pleasant, but the moral philosophers believed it would be predictable.[6]

Yet in other ways, this argument is an attempt to engineer nothing less than a social revolution. Above all, Moyo claims, 'the middle class needs a government that will let it get ahead' (2009, p. 57). The desire to bring the liberal capitalist revolution to Africa, however, is a long-standing colonial fantasy that never manages to address the issues of overproduction in the advanced capitalist states and the ways in which capitalist development in one part of the global system disarticulates its possible rise in others. This is what people like Walter Rodney (1982) were trying to address in the post-independence moment that took place in Dar es Salaam (late 1960s to early 1970s), while people like Colin Leys (1975, 1982), Michael Cowen (1982) and Raphie Kaplinsky (1980) were debating accumulation and dependency in Kenya in this journal.

Seen from another perspective, Moyo's book suggests that finance capital is simply interested in changing the group it wants to hold responsible for the next round of loans from the North to ensure that interest

payments continue to flow from the continent into Wall Street firms. The governments in Africa simply cannot hold (or repay) more debt. Moreover, most proved to be so corrupt, and, as Fanon predicted, such a 'little greedy caste, avid and voracious' that they could no longer be trusted by bankers or their citizens (Fanon 1968, p. 141). Thus perhaps there is a desire among bankers to bypass the potentially protective institutions of nation-states, curtailing a return to inward-looking accumulation regimes that might arise from renewed nationalist sentiments amidst the failures of neoliberal structural adjustment programmes. In the process, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund can, as Soederberg suggests, continue to play a policing role and act as an insurer against the rising volatility of a system free of national capital controls (2004, pp. 20–23). Perhaps it is a move to shed one more level of 'extra-economic' forms of domination in favour of ever more pure economic hegemony (Wood 2003, p. 153). Yet recent years have also seen the militarisation of aid, while traditional aid budgets are gutted. Klein (2007) describes a 'disaster capitalism complex' whereby corporate interests are lining up for rebuilding contracts in close collaboration with militaries.

Fiction in place of history

Moyo would not see things this way because her account is utterly removed from history.[7] The book is mostly a propaganda piece, touting the harmonious benefits that capital can bring to investors from rich nations and to Africans. It is not important that the latter are expected to be pleased with interest rates twice those being paid by Americans (Moyo 2009, p. 80). With a global recession induced by Americans unable to pay mortgages, one wonders why we should expect Africans to do better at double the rates! Moyo's argument is so steeped in ahistorical

economics that she in fact even constructs a fictional country of 'Dongo' to make her case.[8] Upon this country without history she can make use of the jargon that made its way out of the World Bank building over the last decade. Terms like 'social capital', 'strong civil society', 'good policy environments' and 'good governance' are treated as if they are self-evident and universal terms that actually provide some analytical capacity to understand reality.[9] 'Good policy' for the rich is of course 'good policy' for the poor (*Ibid*. p. 40).

Moyo avoids addressing the legions of critical political economy published on aid, indigenous accumulation and dependency (prominent examples being Corbridge 1993, George 1994, Strange 1998, Cheru 2006). Instead, she constructs her opponents simply as 'proponents of aid' without actually naming any of them or examining alternate formulations of the world order by people who have lived in and written on Africa in the global economy for decades: Samir Amin, Giovani Arrighi, John Saul, Issa Shivji and Sam Moyo being some worthwhile examples.

One could at least have considered arguments being made by social movements in Africa such as the Jubilee campaign – or, in her own country, the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection that has been acting as a critical voice on issues of debt management in Zambia for 20 years. Moyo might also read some of the academics in her own country to see whether they agree with her description of Zambia, for example, as having apparently made a transition from 'socialism to capitalism' (Moyo 2009, p. xiv). Zambia is never once described as having been 'socialist' in Bizeck Phiri's *Political History of Zambia* (2006). Any of Kenneth Kaunda's early socialist pretensions were certainly contrary to the realities portrayed in William Tordoff's edited volume on *Politics in Zambia* (Tordoff *et al.* 1974),

which still functions as a text at the University of Zambia and provides case studies of local capitalist class formation. Burdette (1988) also explains how the briefly held policy orientation of 'African democratic socialism' was in 1967 superseded by 'humanism', which, she claims, 'provided some philosophical support for the introduction of welfare programmes while an incipient Zambian capitalist class was substituted for a foreign one in commerce, and state ownership edged out the multinational corporations in mines and manufacturing' (Burdette 1988, p. 77). The latter, of course only ever resulted in 51% ownership, with the remaining 49% staying in the hands of companies like Anglo-American and Roan Select Trust. Andrew Sardanis, a Zambian businessman close to Kaunda who managed the state acquisition of Zambian Consolidated Copper Mines, has also written two volumes on his own ventures in Africa, which included the establishment of a continental bank based in the country. Sardanis' Meridian Bank was established and succeeding under Kaunda, while he blames the post-1991 supposedly pro-capitalist Chiluba government for many of the problems that led it to fail (Sardanis 2007). One could go on, but the point is that if Moyo cannot accurately describe her own country's economy, it is hoped that one would question whether we should accept her prescriptions for the continent.

Markets versus capitalism

A critical contradiction in Moyo's argument is that a local capitalist class was actually coming into being as aid was being poured into Zambia. Moyo suggests that there is a nascent middle class in Africa that 'just needs a government that will let it get ahead'. Perhaps, however, we should examine an actual case of the type of middle class Moyo has in mind. Ample research shows an indigenous, productive, owning capitalist class was coming into

being on the Tonga Plateau in Zambia's Southern Province with the active assistance of the state. It was part of a larger business class documented by Baylies (1978, 1979), among others. Once 'free-market' policies forced that government to retreat, this class went into a dramatic decline with tragic consequences.

Even the wealthiest farmers, with the greatest ability to take advantage of the liberalisation process, claim the reforms were disastrous. This confirms Craig's (2000) findings that show that Zambians were largely incapable of benefiting from privatisations. Ben Kapita was the President of the Zambian National Farmers Union (ZNFU) when it supported liberalisation, and then came to be the minister of agriculture under the Mwanawasa government. As he explains:

> here we did not have the money to enable Zambians to buy into some of these companies. That is what I would have preferred personally. So I have no quarrel with the policy of liberalisation or privatisation but I've got a lot of quarrel with the way it was done from 1992–2001. (Interview, Ben Kapita, Lusaka, 19 July 2007)

The ZNFU actually used to boast that they were the first to support liberalisations, however their new 'go slow' position has been a revision forced by the tragic experiences faced by millions as a result.

Costain Chilala is the head of the Zambian Food Reserve Agency and by his own account the largest independent farmer in the country. He emerged from the successful class of farmers on the plateau. His success is partly attributed to the fact he, like a number of Tonga people, purchased land in Central Province in 1973 when the government was opening up new areas of private title alongside the Tazara railway. Central Province has had greater rainfall and Chilala was able to move into new rust-resistant, tropic-hardy wheat crops made possible by a multi-year

breeding programme funded in part by Canadian aid money. However, even Chilala admits that in the area of Southern Province he emerged from, 'These farms went down, either because sons did not have the know-how in farming, or because of the liberalisations.' (Interview, Costain Chilala, Lusaka 27 July 2007)

George Cornhill, octogenarian and a Tonga man with a white settler father, has been a prominent independence leader, rancher and businessman. Out of 150 interviews, he is the only significant example of an agriculturalist that has been able to consolidate properties in the aftermath of the liberalisations, now owning a good portion of the buildings in Monze. Even though he has benefited in recent years, he believes that the liberalisation process was disastrous locally, with the government abandoning important roles it played – even if to an unsatisfactory degree. As he states of the process:

> that was very bad because, all our people here, the Tonga in particular, they were big maize producers. And the collapse of NAMBOARD [the National Agricultural Marketing Board] destroyed the whole agriculture economy ... the diseases that came and the government did nothing. They let the cattle die. Like, Monze district had the highest cattle concentration in the country and then foot and mouth wiped it out completely. (Interview, George Cornhill, Monze, 25 July 2008)

Even though Cornhill was a prominent supporter of the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) coming to power, he was still aware of the important role the state was playing in the economy and society more broadly. As a student in South Africa he had met Mahatma Gandhi and came to know many of the independence leaders in the region. He knew that when colonial governments were withdrawing, they were leaving a society largely absent of local wealth, and thus the state had a role to play in creating the

conditions for it – regardless of the class relations within which it would be created and distributed. As he states:

> all of the infrastructure we see now was built by Kaunda: universities, hospitals, clinics, roads. You know, he had that vision, but when Chiluba came, he built nothing ... people who came [with the MMD], they just went into buildings already found which were built by Kaunda. So Chiluba really did nothing. (Interview, George Cornhill, Monze, 25 July 2008)

Jeremiah Munan'gandu was born in 1924 in Bweengwa, Hamusonde where many of the prominent farmers came from. His family were early recipients of the colonial department of agriculture's 'Improved Farmer's Scheme', and then at independence he was the second African farmer to purchase private property on what is titled 'state land'. Even though Munan'gandu was among the most prominent and business-savvy farmers, like others, he did not understand the privatisation process when they voted for the MMD and feels that people were cheated. As he states:

> I think some of the people who had economic knowledge could have seen it, but we others, we couldn't see it ... we thought these things would go the way it was presented to us. It was always on TV. How they were describing the privatisation we thought it was going to work well ... when it came it did not benefit everybody. It was meant for top politicians, those that were in authority. Those were the beneficiaries. If we tried to buy one of those companies we couldn't get through. (Interview, Jeremiah Munan'gandu, Monze, 26 July 2008)

The liberalisations coincided with the removal of state veterinary services, and as a result Tonga farmers lost huge portions of their herds to foot and mouth and to Corridor disease that swept across the country every two years or so. For those that managed to survive this, they may

nevertheless have been hit hard by interest rates that by many accounts rose as high as 200%. In undertaking this research I assumed that some Tonga farmers might have used their prominent positions in the civil service and accumulated wealth to be able purchase many of the parastatals. However, when I interviewed prominent farmers the response was always the same. Everyone agreed with the statement of farmer Jeremiah Mutelo that, by the time the privatisation process took place, 'there weren't any established Tonga agriculturalists at that time … all the farmers that were high went down … people ran away from the loans' (Interview, Jeremiah Mutelo, Monze, 23 July 2008). Instead people tend to feel it is the thieves who benefited. A very small number of farmers survived this culling, so long as they were without loans in the season before the liberalisations. Almost all, however, have drastically cut the acreage they farm because they cannot access sufficient inputs. Government statistics show that the percentage of the population in Southern Province classified as employers fell from 1.5% in 1990 to 0.4% in 2000 (Government of the Republic of Zambia [GRZ] 2004, p. 68). Agriculture comprises more than 70% of the economy.

There is a perception implicit in social-engineering approaches to development that Africans 'lack of a culture of modern entrepreneurship' (Wild 1997, p. xxi). In examining capitalists in Zimbabwe, Wild argues that Africans had not gained familiarity with processes 'of working with financial institutions, and of using capital and learning economic procedures' (*Ibid*.) Yet Tonga farmers do not feel it is a lack of ability that prevents them from producing greater surpluses and hiring labourers. Instead they felt limited by factors such as the lack of loans at interest rates low enough to justify the risks, insufficient transport, limited access to markets, drastically fluctuating commodity prices and extremely expensive inputs. Moreover, they claim their soils were leached of

fertility by white settlers before them, with insufficient access to water, cattle diseases, inappropriate breeds and insufficient veterinary services. The United National Independence Party (UNIP) government took actions to address these issues and paid particular attention to the needs of those who managed to acquire privately owned land, but after 1991 most farmers abandoned ambitious plans for cash-cropping. This eventually contributed to massive food shortages to the point that in the 2001/2 season, the price of maize meal increased 500%[10] while four million people were at risk of starvation (BBC News 2002a, 2002b, reporting earlier – lower – figures; and, for a broader view, de Waal and Whiteside 2003).

The saddest part of the experiences with neoliberalism is that the retrenchment of the state took place as the HIV pandemic took hold: school access declined, and health clinics were closed down and/or out of medication just as the influx of HIV infections began. Moyo claims that the fact that the number of people on the continent living in poverty nearly doubled between 1981 and 2002 'has its roots in aid' (Moyo 2009, p. 7), but it is more to the point that it had its roots in neoliberalism and the debt crisis. Until then, Zambia's poverty rate had actually halved from its pre-independence days. The practical reality of this for the farmers I spoke with is that all of them had lost many of their children – and therefore a large portion of their workforce.

The new economy

Neoliberalism has of course been met with new areas of growth, but they are not the same as the kinds of production that were being pushed for in the earlier post-colonial period. The most significant accumulation taking place today is in the carrying trade, with people simply buying low in one location and selling high in another. Indigenous profits tend to be tiny because

there are so many participants. There has also been widespread entry into transportation with the withdrawal of a publicly funded bus system. This tends to occur as farmers purchase second- and third-hand Toyota and Mitsubishi trucks shipped from Japan, which can be loaded with market produce while paying passengers sit atop. In these instances some have simply colonised functions of the state while no actual 'development' takes place. This form of privatisation has negative consequences. Although transport does arrive, people are packed in unsafe conditions on inappropriate vehicles with no safety requirements. There are certainly no schedules and no need for drivers' licences when bribes to policemen are just part of the everyday practice of getting crops past checkpoints on the way to the market. A culture of corruption abounds. Why wouldn't it, when neoliberal policy dictates that rational people should think only of themselves because that is what markets require? Who can argue with markets? They are god-like.

In a couple of cases, enterprising youth, such as Stainford Siatontola, were able to make money early in the liberalisation process by moving into cattle transport, taking cattle up to the Copperbelt when NAMBOARD collapsed. Siantontola has since become the most prominent African wholesaler in Choma, with a store selling goods mostly produced in South Africa and China. Locally he has a reputation for participating in witchcraft because people cannot imagine how someone could become so rich so quickly. Markets are seemingly magical.

Capitalist production can of course not be conflated with market transactions. Everyone in Southern Province can tell you that there are more things available on the market now than there were 25 years ago, but they can also tell you there is less work available where they can sell their labour. The dilemma was explained over and over as farmers stated that 'before, we had money but nothing to buy, now there is plenty to buy, but there is no money for it.' Having products dumped on a country in exchange for currency is not the same as having them produced locally within a capitalist wage relationship.

Tonga farmers were largely excluded from the market in feed, seed and chemical inputs. Evidence suggests that before independence some prominent white farmers manoeuvred to maintain control of the seed market. For the most part, however, South African companies have moved in to fill the landscape. Tiger Feeds, for example, is a 13-year-old subsidiary of South African Meadow Feeds, established 67 years ago, and now branches into all aspects of the poultry industry (Interview, Stephen Kyriazis, 23 July 2007). It is 'the largest feed producer in Africa', with grains and logistics provided by Cargill. As one of Cargill's managers explains, 'Meadow Feeds is far and away the most strategic customer for the Grain and Oilseed Supply Chain business in South Africa' (*Cargill News* 2009). South African companies have tended to locate their research and management outside the country, while the national research centres have nearly disappeared, and the university struggles to put out students with basic agricultural sciences.

When I met Judith Lungu, Dean of the School of Agricultural Science at the University of Zambia, she was lamenting the unwillingness of companies to contribute to their school. Lungu received her MA and PhD training in Canada under a Canadian International Development Agency programme which allowed about a third of the faculty to get graduate degrees in Canada, and also built the very structure the offices and classrooms sit in. The day I met Dr Lungu, she had printed up posters for broiler chickens that they were selling around campus to raise operating funds. The Dean is selling chickens! Ben Kapita, agriculture minister at the time, was frustrated with the lack of investment made by foreign agricultural companies operating

in the country and started to ponder whether some forms of capital controls needed to be invoked. In discussing this, Kapita was unfamiliar with the idea that states could actually place conditions on companies wishing to invest (such as requirements of hiring local labour at the research and development level). Yet it resonated with him, and in response he exclaimed:

> we attract them here, we bring them into Zambia, they do business and make a lot of money, but what is their contribution now to the development of the country? Because what happens is they can come here, they make billions, and the billions go out of the country. (Interview, Ben Kapita, 19 July 2008)

Kapita, however, clearly suffers from the same historical myopia as Moyo, because this logic underlay many of the conditions that the UNIP government once placed on companies like Anglo-American in their efforts to deracialise their workforce.

The concrete reality that free-market ideology prevents Moyo from seeing is that the entrepreneurial class she describes as being so oppressed does not exist. That was what the UNIP government had sought to address. There were 100 university graduates in the country at independence, and insufficient wealth in the country for people to invest, in part because colonialism thoroughly disarticulated the societies that existed and then kept people in the deepest poverty possible in an effort to push them into the workforce.[11] In this context, state ownership was justified all over the formerly colonised world because there was no local capitalist class. Following independence there was a state-led effort to create indigenous capitalists, and some successes were made and then lost with the imposition of structural adjustment. Now, nearly 50 years later, the situation is much as it was at independence, except that now there is none of the hope and political mobilisation needed to address the numerous problems resulting from imperialism. This is tragic when the problems of unemployment, housing, public infrastructure, education and health care are many times greater following decades of neoliberal policy.

It is certainly questionable whether the idea of producing a capitalist class in agriculture has ever been a significant force for investment and rising productivity. However, a workforce must eat and, even in spite of the predatory relationship between the state and agricultural producers, production in such a variable environment has never been upheld without state involvement. Although farmers once decried the numerous problems with the agricultural infrastructure of the UNIP state, they today have fond memories of it and want it back.

Note on contributor

Toby Leon Moorsom is a PhD Candidate whose dissertation examines the Experiences of Neoliberalism among Tonga 'emergent' farmers in Southern Zambia. Toby has also been a long-time anti-poverty, global justice and labour activist.

Notes

1. Along with the high-profile Woody Harrelson film, Zombieland, Wikipedia lists 100 feature-length zombie films released in the years 2009 and 2010 combined.
2. At independence, only 6% of land in Zambia had private title (GRZ 2001). Today the figure would be slightly higher, even though the director of the department of agriculture still cites the 6% figure (Interview, Imataa Akayombokwa, 23 July 2007).
3. Here Arthur Lewis' 1954 publication 'Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour' perhaps most explicitly gave justification to such plans.
4. In Africa, write Sarah Bracking and Graham Harrison, '1979 marked a radical change in global economic policy, inaugurated with the "Volcker Shock" (so called after Paul Volcker, then chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve) when the United States suddenly and dramatically raised interest rates, [which] increased the cost of African debt precipitously, since a majority of

debt stock was held in dollars. The majority of the newly independent states had been effectively delivered into at least 20 years of indentured labor. From that point on, access to finance became a key policing mechanism directed at African populations.' (Bracking and Harrison 2003, also cited in Bond 2008.)

5. It is of course questionable the degree to which we can consider the intended recipients of the present-day 'modernisers', when grand projects for human emancipation are shunned unless they meet standards of 'public–private partnerships' as defined by the international financial institutions.

6. As Keynes put it: 'Dangerous human proclivities can be canalized into comparatively harmless channels by the existence of money-making and private wealth, which, if they cannot be satisfied in this way may find their outlet in cruelty, the reckless pursuit of personal power and authority, and other forms of self-aggrandisement.' This is quoted, interestingly enough, in Peter Bauer (1981) to whom Moyo dedicates the book.

7. It is in fact shocking that a Harvard and Oxford graduate writing on Africa would think it reasonable to cite Wikipedia as a credible source on something as significant to African history as the Berlin Conference (Moyo 2009, p. 158).

8. One can only imagine how offensive this would seem were it to come from a white, non-African person.

9. On 'social capital' see Fine (1999); on 'civil society' see Allen (1997); on 'good governance' see Schmitz (1995) and Nanda (2006).

10. By some accounts these shortages were partly due to inadequacies in marketing infrastructure while crops rotted on farms.

11. The work of early anthropologists such as Audrey Richards reveals intimate details of the challenges of reproducing the workforce under these conditions. Her work in Northern Province has been the subject of a fantastic re-study by Moore and Vaughan (1994).

References

Allen, C., 1997. Who needs civil society? *Review of African Political Economy*, 24 (73), 329–337.

Bauer, P., 1981. *Equality, the Third World, and economic delusion*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Baylies, C., 1979. The emergence of indigenous capitalist agriculture: the case of Southern Province, Zambia. *Rural Africana*, 4–5, 65–82.

Baylies, C., 1978. *Class formation and the state in Zambia*, Thesis (PhD). University of Wisconsin-Madison.

BBC News, 2002a. Zambia declares food disaster [online], 30 May. Available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/2016168.stm [Accessed June 2003].

BBC News, 2002b. Tension mounts over Zambia's food shortages [online], 3 October. Available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/2297207.stm [Accessed June 2003].

Bond, P., 2008. Against Volcker. *Counterpunch*, 12 November. Available from: http://www.counterpunch.org/bond11122008.html [Accessed 25 August 2010].

Bracking, S. and Harrison, G., 2003. Africa, imperialism and new forms of accumulation. *Review of African Political Economy*, 30 (95), 5–10.

Burdette, M.M., 1988. *Zambia: between two worlds*. Boulder: Westview.

Cargill News, 2009. The tools of trade [online]. September – October. Available from http://www.astralfoods.com/PDFs/Meadow%20Feeds%20makes%20full%20use%20of%20the%20Cargill%20toolbox.pdf [Accessed 13 May 2010].

Cheru, F., 2006. Playing games with African lives: the G7 debt relief strategy and the politics of indifference. *In*: C. Jochnick and F.A. Preston, eds. *Sovereign debt at the crossroads: challenges and proposals for resolving the Third World debt crisis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 35–54.

Chipungu, S.N., 1988. *The state, technology and peasant differentiation in Zambia: a case study of the Southern Province 1930–1986*. Lusaka: Historical Association of Zambia.

Corbridge, S., 1993. *Debt and development*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Cowen, M., 1982. The British state and agrarian accumulation in Kenya. *In*: M. Fransman, ed. *Industry and accumulation in Africa*. London: Heinemann, 142–169.

Craig, J., 2000. Evaluating privatisation in Zambia: a tale of two processes. *Review of African Political Economy*, 27 (85), 357–366.

de Waal, A. and Whiteside, A., 2003. New variant famine: AIDS and food crisis in southern Africa. The *Lancet*, No. 362 (9391), 11 October, 1234–1237.

Dixon-Fyle, M.R., 1976. *Politics and agrarian change among the plateau Tonga of*

Northern Rhodesia, c. 1924–63, Thesis (PhD). School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Edemariam, A., 2009. Everybody knows it doesn't work [online], The *Guardian*, 19 February. Available from http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/feb/19/dambisa-moyo-dead-aid-africa [Accessed May 2010].

Fanon, F., 1968. *The wretched of the earth*. Harmondsworth: Penguin (original published in French in 1961).

Fine, B., 1999. The developmental state is dead – long live social capital? *Development and Change*, 30 (1), 1–19.

George, S., 1994. *A fate worse than debt*. London: Penguin.

Globe and Mail, 2009. Goldman's PR efforts undermined by promotions. *Globe and Mail*, 19 November. Available from: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/goldmans-pr-efforts-undermined-by-promotions/article1370413/

GRZ, 2001. *Economic Report 2000*. Lusaka, Zambia: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

GRZ, 2004. *Zambia 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Southern Province, Vol. 8*. Lusaka: Central Statistics Office.

Hirschman, A.O., 1977. *The passions and the interests: political arguments for capitalism before its triumph*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kaplinsky, R., 1980. Capitalist accumulation in the periphery: the Kenyan case re-examined. *Review of African Political Economy*, 7 (17), 83–105.

Klein, N., 2007. *The shock doctrine: the rise of disaster capitalism*. Toronto: Knopf.

Leys, C., 1975. *Underdevelopment in Kenya: the political economy of neo-colonialism, 1964–1971*. London: Heinemann.

Leys, C., 1982. Economic development in theory and in practice. *Daedalus*, 111 (2), 99–124.

Momba, J., 1982. *The state, peasant differentiation and rural class formation in Zambia: a case study of Mazabuka and Monze Districts*. Thesis (PhD). University of Toronto.

Moore, H.L. and Vaughan, M., 1994. *Cutting down trees: gender, nutrition, and agricultural change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890–1990*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Moyo, D., 2009. *Dead aid: why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*. New York: Farrar.

Nanda, V.P., 2006. The 'good governance' concept revisited. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 603 (1), 269–283.

New York Times, 2009. Bonuses put Goldman in public relations bind. *New York Times*, 15 October. Available from: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/16/business/16bonus.html?_r=1&dbk

Phiri, B.J., 2006. *Political history of Zambia: from colonial rule to the Third Republic, 1890–2001*. Asmara: Africa World Press.

Rodney, W., 1982. *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Washington: Howard University Press.

Sardanis, A., 2007. *A venture in Africa: the challenges of African business*. London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd.

Schmitz, G.J., 1995. Democratization and demystification: deconstructing 'governance' as a development paradigm. *In*: G. Moore and J. Schmitz, eds. *Debating development discourse: institutional and popular perspectives*. New York: St. Martins, 54–90.

Shivji, G.I., 2009. *Accumulation in an African periphery: a theoretical framework*. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers.

Soederberg, S., 2004. *The politics of the new international financial architecture: reimposing neoliberal domination in the global South*. London: Zed.

Strange, S., 1998. The new world of debt. *New Left Review*, I/230 (July–August), 91–114.

Tignor, R.L., 2006. *W. Arthur Lewis and the birth of development economics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tordoff, W., *et al.*, 1974. *Politics in Zambia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Vickery, K., 1978. *The making of a peasantry: imperialism and the Tonga Plateau economy, 1890–1936*. Thesis (PhD). Yale University.

Vickery, K., 1986. *Black and white in Southern Zambia: the Tonga plateau economy and British imperialism, 1890–1939*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Wild, V., 1997. *Profit not for profit's sake: history and business culture of African entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Baobob.

Wood, E., 2003. *Empire of Capital*. London: Verso.

West African social movements 'against the high cost of living': from the economic to the political, from the global to the national[1,2]

Bénédicte Maccatory[a]*, Makama Bawa Oumarou[b] and Marc Poncelet[c]

[a]*Institut des Sciences humaines et sociales (ISHS) – Changement social et développement, Université de Liège, Liege, Belgium;* [b]*Université de Paris I, Panthéon: la Sorbonne, Paris, France;* [c]*Institut des Sciences humaines et sociales (ISHS) – Changement social et développement, Université de Liège, and Pôle Liégeois d'Études sur les Sociétés urbaines en Développement (Pôle-SuD) Research Centre, Liege, Belgium*

The globalisation of the market for basic consumer goods, speculation, and the success of biofuels production all underlie a recent return to the international agenda of the issues of food security, food sovereignty and the right to food. In 2008, the 'high cost of living' phenomenon sparked off numerous collective, urban, African protests movements: these challenged and took the governments in power by surprise, impelling them to react in different ways. This article describes and analyses the social movements brought into being by activist organisations (including unions, human rights organisations, and consumer associations) in two countries, Niger and Burkina Faso, and demonstrates how important it is to situate the movements in local temporalities and circumstances. One of the main issues highlighted by the findings of the research is the importance of local governance issues: the measures taken in relation to the price rises were aimed more at the symptoms than at the underlying causes, and had only short-term effects. The different temporalities of world events hence played a very minor role, despite the connection of a number of the actors, especially in Niger, to the international sphere via anti-globalisation movements.

Keywords: protest; social movements; high cost of living; West Africa; civil society

The globalisation of the markets for basic consumer goods, their speculative nature and the success of biofuels production all underlie the recent return to the international agenda of issues related to food security, food sovereignty and the right to food. Protests and other demonstrations related to these problems took place at the start of 2008 in nearly 40 countries on different continents, notably in sub-Saharan Africa, following the steep and sudden rise in prices for essential goods, and due particularly to the rise in the price of oil and transport. The wide geographical extent of the demonstrations had the effect of making the term 'bread riots' commonplace, for example in Senegal, the Philippines and Côte d'Ivoire.

These collective and urban protests, which sprang up in countries regarded as very poor, were reported by the international media as they occurred, and seemed to prove the immediacy and now universal strength of this global 'over-determination'. Globalisation had immediate and brutal effects – directly 'taking the food out of the mouths of the

---

*Corresponding author. Email: benedicte.maccatory@ulg.ac.be

very poorest people'[3] (Alternatives Sud 2008). These injustices were opposed and denounced in demonstrations against the price rises for staple foods (such as sugar, milk and cereals) and energy costs.

The protests that erupted did have some recent antecedents (e.g. Niger in 2005), but also longer-term ones: the 'bread riots' or 'hunger riots' that took place in response to the structural adjustment programmes imposed in the first half of the 1990s. Their rapid spread and 'global' nature nonetheless gave them something of a new look: the main reasons for this seem to be that they occurred simultaneously, they were urban, spontaneous, and not centrally directed. They were also consensual in nature, transcending age, differences of politics and identity, and class, recruiting large numbers of people from beyond urban marginalised people or youth. They appeared to be supported by previously unknown coalitions on issues relating to 'the high cost of living' or 'consumer protection'. In short, they revealed a great diversity of organisations involved and a leadership that was partly new.

A number of factors, exogenous as much as endogenous, can be attributed to this so-called food crisis, highlighting the great vulnerability of countries, particularly in Africa, with respect to food imports. An explosion in demand as a result of new consumption habits, a fall in supply following poor harvests in some big exporting countries, insufficiency of local production, anticipation of price rises and speculation on food staples, as well as many more factors, ran parallel with causes that were more specific to particular contexts or regions, such as drought, locust attack or the political situation (Delcourt 2008). At a more general level, 'hunger' became re-established at the centre of the global critique of neoliberalism and the globalisation of markets (Bello 2009). The dozens of demonstrations around this salient set of issues thus gave fresh momentum and spirit to the anti-globalisation movement, which had grown stale, judging by the most recent social forums in the South (Pommerolle and Siméant 2008). From an Africa where little protest had occurred for 15 years, the continent now found itself centre stage and with new actors.

Aside from the assertion of the right to food and it being the duty of public authorities to guarantee this right, it rapidly became clear that these protests maximised the potential of issues that were more locally rooted but at the same time had wider implications. The protests highlighted the ineffectiveness of agricultural policies (in part dismantled following World Bank and International Monetary Fund [IMF] prescriptions) and the enduring inequality of access to public resources and goods.

These collective protests challenged and took the governments of their countries by surprise, by emerging in unexpected ways and circumstances. The authorities reacted with varying measures of policing and legal repression, interventions at sectoral level (e.g. the creation of areas for listening and negotiations), substantive interventions (e.g. tax reductions and subsidies) and structural ones (e.g. cooptation).

What has been learnt from these recent mobilisations? Are they all similarly 'glocal'? Who are they mobilising, and how? What are their motives? Who are they challenging, and how? Do they foreshadow evolving political messages and methodologies of protest and/or schemes of interaction between actors in the protests and public authorities in places where democracy has only been partially institutionalised?

In examining the 'hunger riots' in the two particular contexts of Niger and Burkina Faso, this article intends to open up avenues for consideration. The social movements in these two countries were considerable, significant in scale and represented, particularly in the press, in fairly similar ways. However the issues people were protesting about in both cases went well beyond the scope of 'the high cost of living'. They gave rise to

informal coalitions bringing together different types of organisation generally considering themselves, perhaps controversially, as 'civil society' (Poncelet *et al.* 2006, Pirotte 2007). These included trade union organisations, consumer associations, human rights organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and others. The 'protest' organisations were fairly distinct from the now large numbers of mainly development-oriented NGOs. In the case of Niger, this clearly applied to the movement under discussion here, but also in relation to the food crisis that broke out directly after the 2005 movement (Tidjani Alou 2006, Olivier de Sardan 2008). These movements provoked reactions at many levels of the government.

Many West African researchers[4] have gathered, assembled and helped to organise the empirical material presented in this article. They collected local documents (e.g. press cuttings and press releases) and interviews with leaders of the movement (from NGOs, trade unions, and so on), members of parliament, and journalists who had been following the events. When possible, they observed particular demonstrations through participation.

This article provides a comparative case study of Niger and Burkina Faso, analysing cross-cutting factors that enable the similarities as well as the differences (in some cases significant ones) to be drawn out. The conclusion sets out a number of possible interpretations in relation to what happened within the space for negotiation, and highlights the significance of these protests.

One of the main messages is the suggestion that, in contradistinction to media representation, these movements remain difficult to interpret if not situated in local temporalities and decisions. They should be viewed rather as a national continuum relevant to the types of movement engaged in protests that transcend issues around the cost of living. In Burkina Faso and Niger, the protests were translated into native languages of the local polity. The states in each country reacted in different ways, rapidly going beyond a discourse that laid the responsibility on international issues such as market pressures, the international regulatory framework and speculation among others. The reactions at state level attest to the national specificity of the political, social and indeed economic issues at the heart of the protest. Local issues of governance emerged from the research as one of the determining factors. The measures taken, linked to the rise in prices, were a reaction to the symptoms, rather than the root causes. The different temporalities of world events thus played a minor role, even though some of the actors, particularly in Niger, had links to the wider anti-globalisation movement.

Causes, issues and how the movements developed

The timing, historical perspective and causes that triggered the protests, purportedly 'against the high cost of living', translated almost immediately into feelings of 'enough is enough!' and a more general 'fatigue' in the urban populations of the countries in question.

Niger

In Niger, the combination of two major factors appeared to be behind the protests and demonstrations. The first of these was the passing of draft legislation in the National Assembly to increase value-added tax (VAT) from 15 to 19% but also to extend the tax to cover products that, as staples, had formerly been exempt. This sparked off the first large-scale action: '*Opération ville morte*' (Operation Ghost Town) was organised by the *Coalition equité qualité contre la vie chère au Niger* (Fairness and Quality Coalition against the high cost

of living in Niger), which had been set up at the end of 2004, bringing together human rights organisations, consumer defence associations, trade unions and several federations and umbrella bodies representing NGOs, peasant organisations, and others. The population of Niger considered this law a betrayal by their newly elected representatives (with all the political parties lumped together), especially given that most of the members of parliament had been re-elected[5] from the previous legislature, and had made promises that they had not kept. The tax increase had immediate effect, with the price of a sack of rice rising from 12,500 to 17,000 CFA francs, and a loaf of bread going up from 150 to 180 CFA francs. Transport prices were also suddenly and sharply increased. The second factor was the serious food crisis that Niger went through in 2005. Even if the crisis only broke into the public arena in May 2005,[6] it had been foreseeable from the beginning of the year, gradually spreading to different regions of the country. Innoussa Sanna, a member of the coalition, explained (Interview with Makama Bawa, 21 January 2010):

> Our anger was due to the fact that this notorious tax was applied to all basic products at a time of famine and extreme poverty.

Food insecurity is in fact chronic in Niger, and its causes are more structural than linked to the economic climate (Olivier de Sardan 2008). It is a constant historical, political issue that links a government's legitimacy to its ability to ensure the survival of the population (Bonnecase 2010, p. 6). The political party that has dominated political life in Niger since the mid-1970s emerged from a *coup d'état* at a time of famine, and made the fight against hunger a central part of its bid for legitimacy (Bonnecase 2010, p. 8). Even now, recent events in Niger attest to the strength of this connection. By announcing that 'the food crisis is threatening more than half of the population', the new prime minister installed by the *putsch*[7] lifted the taboo on talking about this, as the silence on the subject had been symbolic of the attitude of the presidency and of some of the elites during the crisis.

The interviews carried out in Niger in fact show few links between the rise in prices, the ensuring protests and the beginning of the food crisis, which were all close in time and give the impression of having mutually reinforced each other. The protests against the high cost of living and humanitarian mobilisation around the food crisis lead back to distinct groupings of actors: the national and international NGOs around the food crisis mobilisation, and the trade unions, human rights and consumer organisations around the protest against the high cost of living. Many development organisations and NGOs were, like Mooriben, indirectly associated with the protest against the high cost of living via the *Chambre de concertations des ONG et associations de développement au Niger* (the NGO and Development Associations' Chamber for Dialogue, CCOAD). However the bringing of the food crisis to international awareness led most of them to 'become engaged in the joint action alongside the poorest populations in the rural environment' (Interview, secretary-general of Mooriben, 17 January 2010).

Burkina Faso

While the first protests in Niger took place in February 2005, it was not until the beginning of 2008 that several demonstrations were sparked off in most of the countries of the sub-region, including Burkina Faso. Originally, the movement was started off mainly by traders in the country's secondary cities (Bobo Dioulasso, Ouahigouya and Banfora), trading towns with a certain tradition of opposition to a government that they accused

of neglecting them. In these regions, the numbers of people not voting in elections is a constant phenomenon, attesting to this collective frustration and latent opposition (Loada 2006).

In Burkina Faso, the protest movement in 2008 officially opposed the rise in taxation rates on certain basic products where the prices had suddenly shot up. The first demonstrations degenerated, and many incidences of vandalism against public buildings or infrastructure were recorded. The movement very soon reached the capital and one week later (28 February) a big demonstration was planned, and then banned by the authorities. A demonstration nevertheless took place, again marked by widespread damage and looting. Many demonstrators were arrested, including Nana Thibaut, leader of the *Rassemblement démocratique populaire* (Popular Democratic Rally, RDP), who was charged with being behind the demonstration (Ouédraogo Damiss 2008).

The trade unions, faced with the violence on the streets, regained the initiative in the struggle. They worked together behind the scenes and published a joint declaration inviting the workers to come out *en masse* and take a united stand against the sudden rise in prices. They immediately initiated joint meetings with civil society organisations, and in particular consumer associations, human rights movements, professional associations, anti-corruption groups, women's and youth organisations, and others. These meetings led to the founding on 12 March 2008 of the *Coalition nationale de lutte contre la vie chère, la corruption, la fraude, l'impunité et pour les libertés* (CCVC) (National Coalition against the High Cost of Living, Corruption, Fraud and Impunity and for Rights).

After these meetings came a series of strikes, marches and political meetings between March and May 2008. Numerous press releases, messages and appeals were published, trying to explain to the population the mechanisms that had led to the price rise and the responsibility of the government in power. After the events of May, the offer of negotiation between the government and the CCVC leaders was accepted in December 2008 but, despite threats of action, no further action took place.

Following the 'riots' of February and the arrests, the court procedures were accelerated and 153 demonstrators in Bobo and 169 in Ouagadougou were given prison sentences, some of them harsh, and quite disproportionate to the charges. Draft legislation aimed at suppressing acts of vandalism on the public highway was adopted by the Council of Ministers and soon afterwards passed by parliamentary majority in April 2008 (Loada 2008). These acts of repression certainly had a major inhibiting effect, and the movement ran out of steam, particularly as the way that the state had handled the previous protests (especially when people mobilised after journalist Norbert Zongo was assassinated in the late 1990s) was also reminiscent of other tactics for discouraging protests (*Politique africaine* 1999, Loada 1999).

Thus in both of these cases, the issues soon went well beyond the issue of high cost of living, and were directly aimed at the governments of the two countries (Gazibo 2007b). In Burkina Faso, the coalition protest platform brought in an explicitly political list of issues from the raising of public sector salaries and pensions to the reopening of the Zongo case, the bringing of the authors of economic or political crimes to justice, and questioning whether the guarantees of freedom of the press and of citizens' freedom of choice to vote for independent candidates had been met.[8] Political issues also very soon appeared in Niger, where slogans severely criticised the state representatives' rates of expenditure and parliamentarians' 'exorbitant' allowances. Transparency in the management of public affairs, the handling of the conflict in the North of the country (the Touareg rebellion), and the forthcoming amendment to the constitution of 9 August 1999 authorising a third term in office for the president were also challenged.

In both cases, the disparity between the precarious living conditions of the majority of the populations, and the outward signs of wealth of the few, made people angry. In Burkina Faso in particular, but also in Niger, the population had for a number of years been building up resentment towards the government, its style of governance, the choices it made, its control over freedom in the public sphere, as they saw what was going on underneath it all (*Politique africaine* 1999). The government in Burkina Faso had got itself into an impasse after the Zongo affair, and this, alongside the elections of 2002 and 2005, seemed to discourage the protest groups, even if the opposition was able to score a few points. There was therefore now an opportunity for the people of Burkina Faso to show the level of their widespread and enduring dissatisfaction (Hilgers and Mazzocchetti 2006).

The actors

Outwardly the urban coalitions behind the 'hunger riots' in Niger and Burkina Faso brought together fairly comparable groups: consumers' organisations, trade unionists, defenders of human rights, NGOs and others. However the mobilisation process soon revealed actors that differed according to the different contexts. The coalitions were spontaneously organised in response to precise facts about the cost of living. In Niger, the creation of the coalition came before the mobilisations, while in Burkina Faso the opening up of the unions to other organisations appeared to demonstrate a desire to channel the violent protest events.

Burkina Faso

Following the protests and actions against the high cost of living in Burkina Faso, the groups of affiliated trade unions and independent unions soon tried to build a front and to rally a range of other actors. Some people, journalists in particular, claimed at the time that this was a way of avoiding a repetition of the excesses which had provoked the previous repression. The union leaders therefore signed the press releases and led the coalition meetings.

Historically, the main union members in Burkina Faso were civil servants, which may explain why the mobilisation had little support from peasant groups. The pluralism of the unions, according to some authors (Muase 1989), was a strategy for maintaining a level of independence from the government. However the unions' relationship with the government ('allegiance to power') *a priori* distinguishes the affiliated union groups from the independent unions (Loada 1999). The unions – mainly the *Confédération générale des travailleurs du Burkina* (CGTB) – had been weakened by the Sankara revolution (1983–88), and came back in the coalition that formed during the Zongo affair, in a break from their previous corporatist relationship with government. However the human rights organisations and pro-democracy NGOs had been in the forefront of the protest scene until then. The issue of the 'high cost of living' thus provided an opportunity for a number of the unions once more to occupy a central position of protest on an issue that affected the well-being of 'workers', but could also be used to redefine their central purpose and support.

At different stages in the history of Burkina Faso, students have traditionally been involved in political struggles, the most recent being the assassination of the journalist Zongo and the subsequent public reaction. This very diverse movement bringing together student issues and various political disputes became so widespread that it led to the cancelling of the academic year 1999–2000, known as the *année blanche*, or blank year, and the reform of the university system (Mazzocchetti 2006). The students took part in the

movement against the high cost of living via the *Union générale des étudiants du Burkina* (UGEB)[9], which was part of the CCVC coalition, but did not appear to play a major role. This might be explained by the university reform that had taken place, and the fear of another 'blank year', given that the demonstrations reached their peak between February and May 2008.

The traders that took part, and indeed which had been behind the first demonstrations in Burkina Faso's secondary cities, were not officially represented within the coalition. At a general level, it turns out that the traders were involved at the local, national and indeed the international level in the speculation, and hence in the price rises on local and regional markets for staple goods.

Niger

In Niger, the pattern was slightly different. The influence of the traders on events was undeniable, and they were certainly strengthened by their representation within the National Assembly: in 2005, 80% of parliamentarians were traders.

In Niger, charismatic leaders – mostly former student activists of the 1980s – emerged from the movement, speaking out and mobilising the population. Following the creation of the coalition and the vote in the National Assembly raising taxes, a 'ghost town' protest day was organised on 15 March in Niamey and then in other towns a few days later. This was the first action led by the coalition, and was highly successful in many of the towns. People from different social groups took to the streets, including small-scale vendors, characterised as 'the lady that cooks up fritters by the roadside'. After the 'ghost town' protest days, five leaders were arrested. The arrests galvanised the movement, and the government in power soon had to free them, and, moreover, to open negotiations with them and other figures considered neutral (particularly university teachers) in order to open up a 'permanent' space for dialogue between civil society and the state on a number of issues. These issues included the setting up of a consultative body which still did not include all the parties. The government took advantage of the leaders being in prison to set up this negotiating tool and thus made the most of the internal tensions in the movement. First, disagreements emerged between the union organisations and the others (who were considered to be favoured by or too close to the government), followed by personal differences between the five leaders who had been arrested. Many of these differences went back to historic disagreements and were thus deeper than the manifest difficulties that emerged over building the coalition rather than the constituent organisations (Hubaux 2006).

The heterogenous nature of the Fairness and Quality Coalition against the high cost of living in Niger, which brought together actors such as human rights and consumer protection organisations, was more innovative than previous protest movements, which had often been constructed largely by unions and students. The emerging leaders were, however, already well known, as they had come from the student protest circles of previous years. Now mostly in their forties,[10] they had lived through the big demonstrations of February 1990 that came before the democratic demands of the National Conference, during which two students were shot by police while peacefully marching. Since then, they had been involved in the union movement, representing various organisations such as human rights and consumer protection activists, or involved in the anti-globalisation movement. This was the case for Moussa Tchangari, one of the founders of *Alternative espaces citoyens*, which had various means of communication available to it, including an independent radio channel that was able to broadcast calls to demonstrate and the main messages around the high cost of living campaign (and other issues), but was closed down by the

government from 15 March. Tchangari's international broadcasts and his involvement in anti-globalisation movements did not directly affect or change the course of the movement. However, his avant-garde image as an activist with few qualms about defying the government was strengthened. Moussa Tchangari appeared to be a radical man of integrity and loyalty to a political line of action.

Another leader who was very visible in the movement was Nouhou Arzica, who generally appeared both popular and also populist. He had been the founder of a consumer association and became the official head of the coalition, which brought him new fame, given that the scale of the demonstration of 15 March was unprecedented in Niger. Later on, in the name of the movement, he took a stand against the rebellion in the North of the country, which was seen as going over to the government's position. The populist views he offered, which were conveyed in the country's local languages, denounced a political class that was often corrupt and betrayed the aspirations of the people (Hubaux 2006).

At the time of the referendum on amending the constitution to ensure a third mandate for President Tandja (4 August 2009), the leaders of the organisations in the coalition took different positions.[11] Most of them joined the *Coordination des forces pour la démocratie et la République* (CFDR) (Coordination of Democratic Forces for the Republic)[12] which grouped together most of the political parties and affiliated union groupings. Many of the organisations stood back, while others, such as *Mouvement citoyen*, led by Nouhou Arzica, took a position supporting the referendum (Hubaux 2010). This explicit political division within civil society therefore led to a split. Thus, for example, the last government formed by President Mamadou Tandja after the legislative elections of 20 October 2009 offered Moctar Kassoum the position of Minister of Communications and Government Spokesperson. Kassoum, Nouhou Arzica's right-hand man, was 30 years old and had no experience of affairs of state. No one was fooled: the recuperation was rapidly denounced as a personal betrayal, and most of the interviews carried out in January 2010 indicated an increased attitude of disapproval and distrust towards the protest organisations that had previously been so central in the movement.[13]

The types of protest

The different types of protest were linked to the types of actor leading the movements and to the socio-political trajectories within which they fall. While the Nigerian context allows for periodic hope for change, the movements in Burkina Faso seem to bear similarities to the rituals of protest that run through contemporary history without resulting in a significant empowerment of the social actors or bringing about a real space for participation. Loada (2008) is highly critical of various 'social movements' in 2007 (murders in bars), in 2006 (compulsory wearing of crash helmet on two-wheeled vehicles) and 2003 (fire in the Ouagadougou central market). These were followed by the movement *'trop, c'est trop'* – 'things have gone too far' after the Zongo affair, and then by the movements against the high cost of living. Loada speaks of 'the way in which social protest movements have become commonplace' (Loada 2008, p. 68). The two last protests fall within the scope of such a description. First, the apparent surprise on the part of the government, then the rapid formation of the movement and its increase in power, followed by police and judicial repression combined with the appearance of negotiating, and manoeuvring aimed at causing and exploiting internal weaknesses and divisions in the movement. These ingredients were present in 2008 before the movement ran out of steam (or was deterred), which was, as usual, interpreted – with a degree of fatalism – as a new victory by a government considered to have large funds available for dealing with protest. The coalition that followed

the Zongo affair was active between December 1998 and May 1999. The more informal and smaller coalition 'against the high cost of living' lasted the same length of time, but the key difference is that it achieved fewer enduring gains.

The Nigerian tactics of a head-to-head confrontation and a return to street demonstrations goes back to the student-activist background of the main leaders of the campaign. The reliance on personalities in this case is much more apparent, and it is not surprising that rumour, both within and on the periphery of movements, drew upon personalities to give a new structure to the protest. These leaders, with the evidence of their 'moral flair' and 'know-how', gave a new look and feel to the protests, but also precipitated the break-up of the movement. The 'ghost town' (or 'ghost country') protest days were so effective in March 2005 because they had been supported by small urban traders. The taxi drivers' unions, small traders and itinerant sales people had all responded to the appeal. The attempts to crack down on the protest had had little effect, and the roads emptied, taxis stopped and service stations closed. This very effective form of protest upheld the movement and gave the leadership credibility, and continued to work until the break-up of the coalition.

Islamic forms of discourse were also been widely used in the protests in Niger 'against the high cost of living', particularly after the arrest of the leaders of the protest. The leaders of civil society organisations (CSOs) called for prayers 'against the decision' to be organised. The *marabouts*, Muslim holy men, most of a Salafist persuasion, now showed their capacity for protest in a more political context than in 2001 (when they had protested against the Festival of African Fashion, which they had considered provocative) and was comparable in scale to their protest at the publication of the cartoons of the prophet Mohammed in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Poten* in September 2005. On this occasion, not only did a number of religious leaders take to the streets, but they also used Friday prayers and independent radio stations to denounce the behaviour of the country's rulers. The Islamic organisations (for example, the Izala movement) encouraged the faithful to fast for two days each week and/or to organise prayers groups to call on Allah's help, because, they said, 'those in government want to make God's land unbearable' (Makama Bawa *et al.* 2006, p. 23). These calls, their vectors and their political messages, are sometimes considered further demonstrations of the Islamicisation of the national context. They are clearly significant in a Muslim country like Niger (Makama Bawa 2003, Makama Bawa *et al.* 2006).

In Burkina Faso as in Niger, composers were inspired by the most recent protests and wrote songs, while some rap group songs were used by demonstrators in 2007 and 2008 in Burkina Faso: *'La vie est devenue dure comme un caillou'* – 'life has become as hard as a stone.'

Thus it can be seen that the actors of the protests, particularly in Niger, aware of the deterrent and repressive actions of the state, tried to find new, effective ways to protest that would be popular and would sometimes compel the governing powers to negotiate – even if, as in May 2005 in Niamey, the success was of relatively short duration.

The urban nature of the protests was more apparent in Niger, despite the rural context of the food crisis that followed them. The messages certainly used more effective vectors in the towns, but it should be remembered that a number of the products affected, such as rice or sugar, are 'luxury products' at village level. The high cost of living and the rise in taxation thus affected the urban population more, even though the food crisis had been more acute in the rural areas.[14] Finally, as has already been mentioned, peasant organisations are most active when close to their grassroots and hence less active in an urban context, even if they consider that they participated in the movement via their membership of umbrella bodies.

The state and the national political arena

In the international media's 'globalising' but superficial representation of the 'hunger riots', the African states were represented as relatively 'powerless'. However, the protests were directly and explicitly aimed at political configurations in markedly national political spheres, uses of language, and legal contexts. Engagement between protesters and government involved a combination of repression and conflict management. These therefore appeared to be local methods of exercising power that were brought into play, rather than abstract exchanges.

In Niger, as in Burkina Faso, a number of substantial gains were achieved: taxes were reduced, the rectification law in Niger was abolished, food distributions were organised, and the sale of cereals was organised at accessible, 'social' prices. In summary, in the very short term, states reacted in a way weakly connected to the world economic context within which the price rises had occurred.

Also in both countries, their governments each appeared to be under threat and to have been placed under pressure by the coalitions behind the protests. Each government reacted vigorously, with arrests in Niger and arrests, rapid sentencing and the passing of an anti-damage law in Burkina Faso. However the governments were to an extent compelled at the same time to offer spaces for discussion and even negotiation. In Burkina Faso, this might rather be expressed as a willingness to give information and discuss issues between the government and the country's social, economic and political forces. An *ad hoc* parliamentary committee was set up within the National Assembly and put in charge of proposing potential solutions. It is clear, however, that the Burkina Faso government soon found itself powerless in the face of the basic issue behind the protest. Few solutions were really possible (Loada 2008), and the setting up of the committee was essentially strategic.

The repression at first stirred up and provoked the people, but undeniably led to the subsequent weakening of the movement. In Niger, during the period when the main leaders were arrested, the weakened movement agreed to negotiate with the government, and this certainly revealed a point of disagreement among the different currents of opinion within the movement. Some refused to negotiate, and those that did participate (e.g. the unions) saw themselves being accused of being 'too close' and of 'compromising themselves'. The points of internal dissent described above only worsened, and the movement broke into 'sub-movements' and 'sub-coalitions'. The issues now taken up by this 'activist' civil society did not bring unanimity, as opinions differed. However the major mobilisation in the first half of 2005 in Niger indisputably influenced the space for negotiation which was gained by these movements that represented a certain part of civil society.

The public authorities were unable to avoid having to handle these protests. The social protest in Niger gained a visibility and position that they did not previously have, regarding issues considered by some to be intractable (Bonnecase 2010) and expressing important political issues. The participative body for representatives of civil society that was set up to handle the crisis brought to light the internal tensions within the movement, contrasting those who thought that it was important to take part if the government agreed to repeal the law introducing a rise in VAT (this being the view notably of Nouhou Arzica) with those who refused to take part and denounced a government subject to the diktats of international organisations (the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the West African Economic and Monetary Union).

The public authorities doubtless also used various tactics to stir up internal tensions and exploit weaknesses and to turn the activists and protesting groups from their main

objectives. In Burkina, the official press release denounced an 'official' civil society that had been overtaken by an 'informal' civil society that was 'breaking apart' (Loada 2008). The press and media in general in both countries played an important role in the publicising of messages, in the debate and in the discussion around issues and the positions being taken by the various parties. In Niger, the media were at the centre of a significant issue: when the radio station *Alternatives* (which was managed by the organisation *Alternative espaces citoyens*, led by Moussa Tchangari) was shut down by the government at the end of March 2005, a number of journalists were arrested, in some cases only for a short time, but the heavy government pressure on the press continued in any case when the latter covered the issue of the government's delay and diversion of food aid.

Recent political events in Niger saw the government trying to regain a position of strength. The rumours of the third presidential mandate as early as 2007 in fact aroused many reactions. A demonstration – a march in silence – was organised in December 2008, and attracted 1000 participants. The specific objectives of this rally were for the high cost of living to be lowered, and for the constitution to be respected. The marchers' slogans stated their refusal to accept a constitutional *coup d'état*. The referendum went ahead on 4 August 2008, and elections were organised. These were boycotted by the opposition parties, as well as by a number of the civil society organisations. The Sixth Republic was installed and a new government appointed. However, on 18 February 2010, the military seized power, imprisoned Tandja and set up the *Conseil suprême pour la restauration de la démocratie* (CSRD) (the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy). To judge by the spontaneous outbursts of joy in favour of the military on the streets in the country's main cities – even Tandja's home region to the East of the country,[15] it was as though this *coup d'état* had come to defend a democracy under threat and had been welcomed by the whole population. The transitional government put in place by the military junta did not include any representatives of civil society, although they had requested a place. However, Marou Amadou, head of the CROISADE coalition,[16] was appointed president of the National Consultative Council, an important body within the transition. This was a positive signal. Throughout the process, even when there were divisions, CSOs had made their voice heard, although they were often deemed 'political actors'. In an analysis of citizens' movements since the 1990s, Gazibo (2007a) defends the thesis of the gradual emergence of a public space in Niger, and shows to what extent the movement around the issue of the high cost of living was involved, via the follow-up of concrete measures taken by the government (repeal of the rectification law, distribution of cereals, assessment of the emergency aid operations during the food crisis, and so on).

In Burkina, however, the attempt by the unions to recapture a more important position by seeking to expand their sphere of influence appeared to encounter a setback, in a clash between on one side an obviously strong government in power, and on the other, an effective demobilisation of the population and its representatives, at least in the urban environment, faced with a gloomy general outlook on the political, social and economic fronts. One may however wonder what the next trigger for protests will be, when Blaise Campaoré (after 21 years in power) has already hinted that he too would like to amend the Constitution so that he can stand again in 2015.

Conclusion

The proliferation of protests around 'the high cost of living' in regions that were not particularly representative of the transnationalisation of social movements suggests that the rather too easy reference to so-called 'glocal' innovations should be examined with some

caution. West African sequences fall within processes that remain open, as shown by the recent Nigerian events. In both cases, the actors that were mobilised, the language of protest, the communications and *modi operandi* employed, the interactive schemes focused on national public authorities, and equally the way that the authorities were compelled to engage with their critics all show medium-term temporalities and scenarios that are closely related to 'contexts' or 'traditions' of opposition. These sequences appear to go back even further, it would seem, to processes of construction of national public spaces that are perhaps less improbable than they might seem. The references to a global 'over-determination' of protest have rapidly given way in the discourse of protest to the seizing of a logic of opportunity to put national powers and public institutions to the test. The references to a regionalisation of the issue were few. The transnational networks to which some of the actors from the protest movement can be connected do not seem to have had any significant effect on the dynamics of the protests and the interaction with governments.

The urban nature of the movements and the involvement of non-salaried and non-student groups are of course not unprecedented, but these aspects deserve at least as much attention as all the other factors of plurality of actors and voices that have been highlighted: religious factors, media, forms of communication, laying stress on meeting minimum material needs of daily urban living as an essential issue of citizenship.

The way of constructing public spaces at a national level does not follow any metahistorical pattern that would make it inevitable or, inversely, anachronistic. Rather it is empirically driven and *de facto* as contingent on the protest interaction as on electoral procedures and international recognition. It is paradoxical, but unsurprising, to see 'glocal' protests strongly directed at public authorities that have few and poor resources available to them in terms of policies.

After two decades of (denied) emergence, or promotion, of African civil societies that remain uncertain, a relative specialisation appears to be developing that moreover is favoured by so-called 'one-off' coalition structures. The development NGOs, peasant associations, pro-democracy organisations, advocacy organisations (human rights, gender, minorities and others) find spaces and niches that are not exclusive, but are nevertheless more specific. However, their relationship with processes to build public spaces would appear to need to be determined by the relationship that they might establish with older union organisations that are undergoing a period of redefining themselves in terms of their constituency as much as of their remit, and indeed of their position as regards power.

Notes on contributors

Bénédicte Maccatory is a historian. She is a researcher at the University of Liege, and coordinates a research group on food security and sovereignty in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Niger. Her research interests are: collective dynamics in West Africa; international development cooperation; and North–South relations. She is a member of PôLE SuD, the *Pôle Liégeois d'Etudes sur les Sociétés urbaines en Développement*.

Makama Bawa Oumarou is an anthropologist. He is currently undertaking doctoral research at the University of Paris I - Sorbonne, on the subject 'from food crisis to community conflicts'. His research

interests are: the Islamic tradition in Niger: pluralism; associative development: relationships to power; and community development.

Marc Poncelet is a sociologist and *professeur ordinaire* at the University of Liege, as well as director of PôLE SuD, the *Pôle Liégeois d'Etudes sur les Sociétés urbaines en Développement*. He has written various works, notably on African civil societies, and is working on the Belgian colonial past in the Democratic Republic of Congo. His research interests are: North–South relations; civil societies and social movements; education; youth; and social change in urban Africa.

Notes

1. The research on which this article is based is part of an inter-university and interdisciplinary research programme: the *Groupe de Recherches en Appui à la Politique de Coopération fédérale sur le thème 'Organisations de la Société Civile, économie sociale et coopération internationale'* (GRAP-OSC). The GRAP-OSC research programme is supported under Belgian development cooperation policy and concerns African civil society organisations, their diversity, their role, and their roots or their representativity, in sectors such as education and the social economy. For more information, see *Pôle Sud, Université de Liège*, at http://www.polesud.ulg.ac.be. The GRAP-OSC was financed by *Coopération belge* (DGCD) via the *Coopération universitaire pour le développement* (CUD). The views in this article are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily reflect those of any of the above bodies.

2. This article was translated for *ROAPE* from the original French text by Clare Smedley. Email: claresmedleytranslations@yahoo.co.uk

3. '*dans l'assiette des plus pauvres*.'

4. In Niger, these were: Makama Bawa Oumarou, anthropologist (Université Catholique de Louvain) and co-author of this article; Amadou Soufiyane, development officer, with a degree in development management (Université de Liège), who carried out research in Niger on social mobilisations, particularly in the field of education. In Burkina Faso, the researchers were: Amadou Barry, sociologist, development officer for INADES-Formation, and a specialist in food security issues, civil society and especially the peasant movement in Burkina Faso. See: http://www.inadesfo.net/

5. The legislative elections took place in November 2004, and the law once passed came into force on 14 March 2005.

6. The food crisis broke into the mainly international media (Tidjani Alou 2008), but President Mamadou Tandja refused to comment on the seriousness of the crisis which had to an extent been exaggerated by some international NGOs (such as Médécins Sans Frontières [MSF]), who objectified it and gave it media coverage through the famine–child malnutrition connection (Olivier de Sardan 2008). See Crombé (2007) and MSF (2005).

7. Mahamadou Danda, appointed prime minister on 23 February 2010 by the military, who carried out the *coup d'état* of 18 February 2010. According to Radio France Internationale (RFI) on 12 March 2010, Danda had been an adviser in the Niger embassy in Canada for the previous 10 years.

8. Taken from press release, 'Plateforme revendicative de la coalition' (Coalition protest platform).

9. UGEB consists of the *Association nationale des étudiants burkinabè* (ANEB) and of two sections outside Burkina Faso (in Senegal and France). For a history of student movements and the University of Ouagadougou, see Bianchini (2004).

10. Nouhou Arzica (manager, founder of a consumer association), Marou Amadou (jurist, activist, and at the head of the *Comité de reflexion et d'orientation independent pour la sauvegarde des acquis démocratiques* (CROISADE), Kassoum Issa (teacher, secretary-general of the teachers' union), Moustapha Kadi (considered by many to represent freedom – abolition of slavery, member of Timidria, an organisation to outlaw slavery – invested in human rights organisations) and Moussa Tchangari (journalist and founder of the Association Alternative Espaces Citoyens).

11. After the mobilisation of 2005 and the internal disagreements between organisations, some groups refocused on the existing structures or created new groupings, which took relatively different positions, each of these backed by a different leader. See Hubaux (2006) and Tidjani Alou (2006).

12. The '*Tazarcé*' coalition was formed at the start of 2009 following the events around the campaign against the high cost of living. It brought together many actors who were against the

government in power and to anti-constitutional measures (e.g. the referendum, elections) decreed by President Tandja. For information on the *Tazarcé* movement (meaning 'continuity' in Hausa), see in particular the Centre Tricontinental (CETRI) site: http://www.cetri.be [Last accessed on 26 April 2010].

13.   The recent events and the way they were received suggest that it would be interesting to examine the relationship between the deadlock in the civilian opposition and the military initiative.

14.   It should be added that solidarity within families and between rural and urban inhabitants add considerable difficulty to the analysis of the impact of the increase in the prices of food products.

15.   See *Le Républicain*, a Nigerian newspaper close to the opposition, owned by Abou Maman, at: http://www.republicain-niger.com. See also the articles on the RFI site from 18 February 2010 and in the following days on the military's seizure of power at http://www.rfi.fr.

16.   The *Comité de reflexion et d'orientation independent pour la sauvegarde des acquis démocratiques* – CROISADE, the Independent Reflection and Steering Committee for the Protection of Democratic Gains, is an organisation for the defence of human rights and the promotion of democracy.

References

Alternatives Sud, 2008. *État des résistances dans le Sud: 2009, face à la crise alimentaire*. Louvain-la-Neuve and Paris: Centre Tricontinental et Editions Syllepse, 15 (4), 2008.

Bello, W., 2009. *The food wars*. London: Verso.

Bianchini, P., 2004. *École et politique en Afrique noire. Sociologie des crises et des réformes du système d'enseignement au Sénégal et au Burkina Faso (1960–2000)*. Paris: Karthala.

Bonnecase, V., 2010. Faim et mobilisations sociales au Niger dans les années 1970 et 1980: une éthique de la subsistance? Paper given at conference *Struggles in Africa/Lutter dans les Afriques*, *Université Paris I* – Sorbonne, 22 and 23 January 2010.

Crombé, X., 2007. Médecins Sans Frontières ou la politique de la crise. *In*: X. Crombé and J. Jézéquel, eds. *Niger 2005. Une catastrophe si naturelle*. Paris: éditions Karthala/Médecins Sans Frontières, 85–113.

Delcombel, E., 2008. La gestion de la crise alimentaire au Niger vue de l'intérieur. *Afrique contemporaine*, 225 (1), 75–101.

Delcourt, L., 2008. Mobilisation dans le sud face à la crise alimentaire, *In*: Alternatives Sud. *Etat des résistances dans le Sud: face à la crise alimentaire.* Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre Tricontinental, 15 (4), 7–32.

Gazibo, M., 2007a. Mobilisations citoyennes et émergence d'un espace public au Niger depuis 1990. *Sociologie et Sociétés*, 39 (2), 19–37.

Gazibo, M., 2007b. L'espace politique nigérien de la crise alimentaire. *In*: X. Crombé and J. Jézéquel, eds. *Niger 2005. Une catastrophe si naturelle*. Paris: éditions Karthala/Médecins Sans Frontières, 59–83.

Hilgers, M. and Mazzochetti, J., eds., 2006. Le Burkina Faso: l'alternance impossible. *Politique africaine*, 101 (March–April). Paris: Karthala, 5–110.

Hubaux, S., 2006. *Les organisations de lutte pour la citoyenneté en Afrique de l'Ouest, quelles dynamiques sociales? Le cas de l'association Alternatives Espaces Citoyens à Niamey (Niger)*. Dissertation (Licencié en Sociologie). *Université catholique de Louvain*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.

Hubaux, S., 2010. Lorsque les jeunes mobilisent leurs réseaux en temps de crise: entre militance associative et économie « informelle », étudier les freins et les ailleurs des mobilisations politiques. Paper given at conference *Struggles in Africa/Lutter dans les Afriques*, *Université Paris I* – Sorbonne, 22 and 23 January 2010.

Loada, A., 1999. Réflexion sur la société civile en Afrique: le Burkina Faso de l'après-Zongo. *Politique africaine*, 76 (December), 136–151.

Loada, A., 2006. L'élection présidentielle du 13 novembre 2005: un plébiscite par défaut. *Politique africaine*, 101 (March–April), 'Le Burkina Faso, l'alternance impossible', 19–41.

Loada, A., 2008. Burkina Faso: petites manœuvres et grandes résolutions face aux mobilisations. *In*: Alternatives Sud. Etat des résistances dans le Sud: face à la crise alimentaire. Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre Tricontinental, 15 (4), 65–73.

Makama Bawa, O., 2003. *La ville tidjâne de Kiota au Niger, un développement endogène à l'ombre des marabouts*. Dissertation for Master's degree in Economic and Social Policy. *Université catholique de Louvain*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.

Makama Bawa, O., Hassane, M., and Diarra, M., 2006. *Études sur les pratiques de l'Islam au Niger.* Report commissioned by Niger office of Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development Niamey, Niger: Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development.

Mazzocchetti, J., 2006. Quand les jeunes poussins se réunissent, ils font peur à l'épervier. Les étudiants burkinabè en politique. *Politique africaine*, 101 (March–April), 'Le Burkina Faso, l'alternance impossible', 83–101.

MSF, 2005. *Ici, l'enfant n'a pas de valeur. Sécurité alimentaire, malnutrition et développement au Niger.* Paris: Médecins Sans Frontières, section française.

Muase, K.C., 1989. *Syndicalisme et démocratie en Afrique noire. L'expérience du Burkina Faso.* Paris: INADES éditions and Karthala.

Olivier de Sardan, J.-P, 2008. La crise alimentaire vue d'en bas. Synthèse des recherches menées sur sept sites au Niger. *Afrique contemporaine*, 225 (1).

Ouédraogo Damiss, A., 2008. Après l'orage. *L'Observateur Palga*. 7083, 3 March.

Pirotte, G., 2007. *La notion de société civile*, Collection Repères. Paris: Éditions La Découverte.

Politique africaine, 1999. Document autour de l'affaire Zongo. 74 (June), 164–184.

Pommerolle, M.-E. and Siméant, J., 2008. *Un autre monde à Nairobi. Le forum social mondial 2007 entre extraversions et causes africaines*. Paris: Editions Karthala, Collection Les terrains du siècle.

Poncelet, M., *et al.*, 2006. *Les ONG en villes africaines. Etudes de cas à Cotonou (Bénin) et à Lubumbashi (RDC).* Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia Bruylant.

Tidjani Alou, M., 2006. Niger: mutations du politique et émergence d'un nouvel acteur social. *In*: Alternatives Sud. *Etat des résistances dans le Sud – 2007*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre Tricontinental, 13 (4), 93–97.

Tidjani Alou, M., 2008. La crise alimentaire de 2005 vue par les medias. *Afrique contemporaine*, 225 (1), 39–74.

BRIEFING

Sudan's 2010 elections – victories, boycotts and the future of a peace deal

Edward Thomas*

President Omar al-Bashir had visited Southern Sudan about once a year since the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the central government. Northern Sudanese supporters and opponents of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) which he leads are seldom seen in the South, although many of them profess a strong belief in the unity of the country, which will be tested in a referendum on Southern self-determination which the CPA has scheduled for January 2011. But in March 2010, the president flew in and out of cities and small towns across the semi-autonomous South, as general elections neared. Everybody in Southern Sudan who wastes time thinking about politics realised that Bashir had realised that Sudan's elections were too close to call. That was back in March of course, when they were too close to call, but by the start of April everyone knew who the winner would be. SPLM presidential candidate Yasser Arman withdrew from the race at the end of March, which cleared the way for a Bashir presidential victory in the polls, which took place at the end of April.

Bashir's election was one of several executive and legislative contests, which were won, as assistant president and security supremo Nafi' Ali Nafi' explained before the results appeared, by the NCP and the Salva Kiir group in the SPLM.[1] The CPA promised democratic transformation and fairer wealth distribution for the country, but it structured that promise around a political alliance that encouraged the two allies to perpetuate each other's hold on power in the other's respective constituencies, siphoning new oil profits into the boomtowns of Juba and Khartoum. For the NCP, that hold meant control over the bulk of the country's resources, and control over Northern society. For the South, that hold meant that the SPLM could lead the voters of Southern Sudan to a referendum on self-determination for the autonomous region, which under the CPA need to take place by January 2011. These elections, the first competitive ones in a quarter of a century, were supposed to be a popular judgement on this alliance and on the CPA itself. But in the event, boycotts by junior coalition parties and the opposition muffled that judgement.

Boycotts

There were several boycotts, rather than just one. The SPLM leadership's decision to withdraw from the presidential race was presented by its Northern sector as a boycott. Many SPLM members believed the party was boycotting in all states of Northern Sudan, apart from Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, two states with a special status in the CPA, where the long civil war in the South spilled over into the North. The Umma Party led by former

*Email: eddie.thomas@riftvalley.net

premier Sadig al-Mahdi also boycotted late in the day, while the Communist Party boycotted early. The Popular Congress Party (PCP), led by Hassan al-Turabi, the leader of Sudan's Islamist movement before a major split in the late 1990s, stayed in the race, along with the Democratic Unionist Party-Original (DUP) of Muhammad Osman al-Mirghani.

Boycotters believed that the NCP manipulated electoral process and state resources to win. From 2005, when CPA implementation began, it had been building its support in preparation. The CPA required investment in Sudan's 25 states, most of which had been starved of cash since the economic crises of the 1990s and before. Figures up to 2007 are available, and they show that significant resources went to Sudan's impoverished periphery after the signing of the CPA, and that about 70% of the money went on salaries.[2] These provincial salaried classes and security men were one NCP constituency in the election.

The next part of the NCP campaign, in the view of the SPLM and the opposition, was the 2008 census. The SPLM and the opposition claim that the census enumerators ignored areas of opposition strength, like the highly diverse shanties of Khartoum and Darfur towns, full of war-displaced; or the Nuba mountains, many of whose people participated in the civil war. Instead, they counted groups that could be fashioned into local vote-banks such as nomadic groups; the nomad population went up by over 300%.[3] Women were better represented than men: the NCP may have seen women as a more malleable constituency than men, and the party was widely alleged to have used a combination of sugar distribution and petty threats to mobilise votes of poorer women. Constituency demarcation, say the opposition, favoured the ruling party. The CPA required the NCP-led government to align laws governing the security forces with the civil and political liberties in the new 2005 constitution that the agreement

inspired, but this did not happen. The NCP's security budget (estimated at 70% of state expenditure) and their ability to tailor local incentives and threats remained intact. Come the voter registration, the NCP was able to use its patronage systems, its security laws and institutions, its local knowledge of a mysteriously and rapidly changing country to limit participation of opposition supporters. Polling was orderly in many centres, although the major non-boycotting parties (the PCP and original DUP) complained of widespread fraud and rejected the results.

The elections in Northern Sudan

The SPLM and the opposition give two main reasons for their different boycotts: they were afraid to lose; and they were afraid to win. If the SPLM/opposition took part and lost, their participation would endorse an NCP system of manipulation and fear rather than challenging it, and entrench the opposition's subordination. But for the SPLM, winning was also a possibility, to judge from Bashir's performances in the South. SPLM candidate Arman could conceivably have won, but many in the opposition believed that would have brought a violent response from the NCP. (Arman gave 'social peace' as one of the reasons for his withdrawal.) He may not have been able to manage the responses of the security forces to any SPLM victory.

After five days of voting, the opposition alleged widespread irregularities in voter registration lists, multiple voting, impersonation, ballot stuffing and intimidation. Different forces provided security for the elections in North and South, and their repertoires differed slightly. At the end of polling, the two large non-boycotting opposition parties in the north (the DUP-Original and PCP) rejected the results before they were tabulated. Even the government joined in – NCP groups accused the SPLM of rigging in the South and in the Blue Nile, and the SPLM's Northern Sector rejected results in the North. In spite

of this ferment, the process was endorsed by African Union observers, and partially endorsed by United Nations, United States and European Union observers.

These rejections and endorsements appeared before votes were tabulated – the process of aggregating results from polling stations into constituencies. Tabulation is an electoral process highly susceptible to fraud, and although it took place in only 26 centres across the country the opposition was largely unable to monitor it. Software broke down and safeguards were thrown away to meet deadlines. Bashir's winning tally of 68% came out first and felt plausible – in spite of his withdrawal, Arman had taken 21%, mostly from the South. But that was where plausibility ended: there were NCP landslides in unhappy Darfur, Eastern and Northern Sudan and in the capital, the peppery centre of opposition politics. In Shendi North, the NCP's unlovable Nafi' (who reportedly set up the ghost houses of the security forces in the 1990s, and helped to organise the war in Darfur) took 93%. In Merowe, once a hard-drinking DUP stronghold, the NCP's former security head Salah Abdallah 'Gosh' persuaded 84% of voters to back him. In Khartoum, a city with millions of war-displaced Southerners and Darfurians, the NCP took the governorship with 87% of the vote. The SPLM candidate came fourth, with only 16,000 votes – outpolled by the NCP by a million votes.

Kassala in Eastern Sudan is near the centre of one of Sudan's smaller mutinies, the former in Eastern Sudan that brought together the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA, the SPLM's armed wing), Beja groups and nomadic groups linked to the Arabian peninsula. It is also the base of the Khatmiya religious order, whose patrician leader Mohamed Osman al-Mirghani also leads the DUP-Original, one of the few major parties that participated in the elections and a major force in all previous parliamentary regimes. In its heartland, the DUP-Original took 6.5% of the

vote in the governorship race, against 85% for the NCP. The DUP did not take a single parliamentary seat (even though 40% of parliamentary seats, including a 25% quota for women, are elected by proportional representation [PR]). The floods in the neighbouring River Gash may have swept his supporters away, commented al-Mirghani. In the Umma heartland of White Nile, the NCP won the governorship and all but one parliamentary seat. The once-great patricians can now choose between humiliation or boycott – in either case, the results are the same.

The patricians were once able to deploy their religious prestige and tribal connections that gave a political coherence to Northern Sudan, and that brought the interests of their heartlands and Sudan's periphery into a balance. They managed Northern Sudan without resort to violence (under their rule, violence was routine in the South). The NCP has replaced the patrician system with boomtown politics at the centre and a more ethnicised and more violent rural political order in the periphery, aggravating regional imbalances. This might have been expected to show in voting patterns – indeed, parliamentary elections in the 1950s, 1960s and 1980s showed increasing support for regional parties representing Beja people of Eastern Sudan, Nuba people of Kordofan and to a lesser extent Darfurians.

Regional parties did not do well this time. The regional question has been reframed by the civil war in the South. During the war and its aftermath, the SPLM managed to mobilise disaffected constituencies in the East, Kordofan, and in the shanties in the booming centre; it also managed to inspire the disaffected in Darfur. Under the leadership of the late John Garang, who died shortly after the CPA was signed, the SPLM might have used these new aspirations and forms of resistance to restructure wealth and power in Sudan away from the dominant centre – creating what Garang called the New

Sudan. But after Garang's death, the SPLM leadership was preoccupied with the many needs and contradictions in the South, and its confidence in its political capabilities in areas of the North outside Khartoum waned. Groups in the far North, East, West and central rainlands often eagerly awaited cooptation by the SPLM, and their eagerness was disappointed as the SPLM retreated from its transformative visions into something which seemed more manageable – Southern separation. The elections would have been an important part of that transformation, if they had offered voters a choice between supporting or reworking the powerful centre. Instead, it appears that regional groups will have to fashion local destinies at the edge of the Khartoum centrifuge. New regional movements fared even worse than the patricians – indeed, in Darfur, the new armed movements which reshaped the region's politics were largely unable to compete in elections, even though some have been incorporated into the government through peace agreements.

Elections in South Darfur

South Darfur has had a large share of the violence in Sudan's westernmost region over the past two years. Several decades of ecological stress, low development and migration, alongside the NCP's successful campaign to replace powerful sectarian parties with weaker ethnic units contributed to the outbreak of major rebellion in 2003 – the rebels sought and failed to join the SPLM, which was at the time seeking its own deal with the government (the CPA). The conflict displaced many sedentary groups, speaking African languages as well as Arabic, from farming villages into towns. The government associated the farmers with the rebels, and used monolingual Arabic-speaking landless groups whose economies were dominated by pastoralism to terrorise the farmers off their lands. That war was then replaced by local conflicts over its remaining spoils (in

particular the empty lands) between newly militarised landless and land-owning Arabic-speaking groups linked to pastoralism. Up to 300 people died in this kind of violence over a two-week period during the elections. Many displaced people refused to register to vote because the government's response to the rebellion had so damaged its legitimacy. The government concentrated its voter registration efforts on the divided but dependent monolingual Arabic-speakers.

To what extent did the elections allow Darfurians to address this dramatic social polarisation? On the road from Nyala to al-Fashir there are new signs for villages with Arabic names like Taybat al-Shakirin ('the goodness of the grateful') or Ramallah (the Palestinian mountain town). They are settled by formerly landless Arabic speakers, on lands emptied of settled populations now crowded into little towns or camps on the road. The polling centre for Taybat al-Shakirin was Duma, a town full of displaced persons, and it was run largely by displaced persons. Polling there was largely unsuccessful, because the National Elections Commission (NEC) kept delivering the wrong ballot papers. It might have been deliberate – or it might have been that electoral officials were distracted by a largely unreported war in the same constituency, between newly militarised Arabic-speaking groups, that may have led to two to three hundred deaths in one week (the government said 22 people had died).

In spite of this violence, South Darfur had a contest more gripping than those in most areas of Sudan: the NCP won only 24 of the 29 seats. The Umma and the DUP won one seat apiece in constituencies where the NCP did not field a candidate (probably an indication that they had done a deal with an individual opposition politician that allowed him to win), and independents (some linked to armed movements that have signed peace accords with the government) won three more. The PCP got 24% of the gubernatorial vote

(against the NCP's 57%) and even managed to get three of the nine seats for women on a PR women's list – in other states, the NCP swept the board in proportional and first-past-the-post races. Even more surprising was the closeness of the race. The PCP came second in 11 races, very often by a whisker – in Al-Salam/Bilayl constituency, the NCP got 34.9% against 34.7% for the PCP.

Al-Salam-Bilayl is a constituency near Nyala with a large displaced population – displaced people may account for up to a quarter of Darfur's population; the census failed to enumerate them. Polling centres in some areas of displacement seemed to be going for the PCP, whose campaign focused on a diagnosis of the dominance of ethnic groups from Sudan's rich centre on the Northern Nile Valley. In one speech, for example, PCP leader al-Turabi claimed that al-Bashir had suggested that a member of al-Bashir's own Ja'ali tribe might honour a Darfurian woman by raping her. In a speech in al-Fasher, the North Darfur capital, he said that Darfur war criminals should be tried in this world before they stand before God in the next one, to receive their painful torment – a reference to Bashir's indictment by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes and crimes against humanity.[4] For Darfurians, the PCP's bitter and inflammatory reworking of the SPLM's New Sudan rhetoric was the main electoral alternative to the NCP. And the PCP did far better in South Darfur than it did anywhere else, partly because of a strong governor's candidate and a strong local party. In some respects, its decision to contest the elections in spite of the SPLM and Umma boycott may have been motivated by over-confidence in its own strength – the party may have wanted to negotiate its way into government after a strong electoral showing. Instead, it got almost no seats nationally. It may now seek to deepen its links with Darfurian armed movements that it tacitly supports, such as

the Justice and Equality Movement, led by a former party member.

The SPLM and the South

Southern Sudan's President Salva Kiir reportedly told one of the many envoys currently providing unsolicited advice to Sudanese elites that he did not want the elections because they would destroy his party. His party trounced all opposition in Southern Sudan and won the governorship in Blue Nile State, one of two Northern states that have special arrangements under the CPA, because of their involvement in the civil war in the South. Kiir himself took 93% of the vote for the Southern presidency, although there was likely ballot stuffing in certain states that inflated the SPLM share of the vote. But in today's Sudan these victories are not the same as party survival.

The SPLM's problem is that it has too many objectives, and the election revealed the contradictions between some of those objectives. In the North, the SPLM could still have mobilised the disaffections that the PCP aimed for. Kiir's delivery is wooden and al-Turabi's lurid, but the SPLM presidential candidate Arman (in some respects a more junior politician) was able to make compelling rhetorical linkages between that disaffection and an almost possible project for New Sudan. The decision to withdraw Arman disappointed many groups who had not managed to develop their own mode of opposition to the Khartoum government during five years' coalition government when the SPLM was balancing with some clumsiness its roles as a military organisation turning itself into a political party; an oppositionist group; a party of transformation with a vision that its cruellest enemies are now forced to invoke; a guarantor of Southern rights; a harbinger of Southern independence; and a junior member of a national governing coalition.

The election showed that the SPLM cannot be all of these things, and Nafi' was correct to say that Kiir's group,

which stresses Southern rights and independence, won an argument about strategy. For this group, Bashir was an attractive candidate for the presidency: he is experienced; he has been weakened internationally because of the ICC indictment. Kiir reportedly told the BBC that he had voted for Bashir and expected many Southerners to do the same.[5]

Kiir was right about the risks of an SPLM split. The SPLM's nomination process was probably less consultative than that of the NCP (both got local parties to nominate three or four candidates for the national leadership to choose from) and many failed SPLM nominees, alongside some failed NCP nominees, stood against their party. A few 'SPLM independents' won – including Bangassi Joseph Mario Bakasoro, the governor-elect of Western Equatoria State. Some observers viewed the SPLM's party indiscipline as a positive indication that people could challenge party decisions and thereby democratise a party still recovering from wartime. But in other places, like Jonglei, Unity and Northern Bahr al-Ghazal, defeated independents were involved in scuffles or attacks against the government – and many of these independents had recently been senior army officers.

In the South, the SPLM won all but four seats in the National Legislative Assembly: the NCP won one seat, SPLM-Democratic Change (the party of former foreign minister Lam Akol, a serial defector from the SPLM) won two. The SPLM's Southern victory was even more crushing than the NCP's northern one: it now holds 92 of the 96 Southern seats in the National Legislative Assembly, while the NCP holds 322 of 348 northern seats. Southern opposition parties, most of them relics of previous political orders revived by the CPA's parsimonious quotas for the participation of political forces other than its two signatories, were completely wiped out.

Southern Sudan has strong vernacular traditions of democracy (albeit traditions that routinely exclude women's participation). But in these elections, insecurity and the presence of the SPLA (which is effectively responsible for security outside the towns) silenced debate. The SPLA's presence, alongside the eclipse of other political forces, sets the scene for the future political development of the South. Electoral contests have not been a vehicle for articulating interests, or spelling out why the South still has so much local conflict. Those political tasks can now only be worked out within the movement. The SPLM is now the only political force in the region that can mediate the region's conflicts – not least those that have their origins in alleged electoral malpractice.

Future prospects

The SPLM now has to work its way to the referendum. It conceded all the legislative seats in Northern Sudan (outside the special areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile), but negotiated an increase in Southern participation in the national legislature, in a pre-election agreement. After the election, the NCP and SPLM announced that they were getting down to work on a host of post-referendum difficulties, like borders, nationality, currency, oil and debts. The SPLM will also need to manage some of the Southern political and social contradictions that were on display during the elections, and make more efforts towards internal democracy. And it needs to work out what to do with its Northern sector, particularly its large constituencies in the Nuba Mountains in Southern Kordofan, where crucial state-level elections were postponed because of failures in the census. Elected state assemblies in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile have a special responsibility in the CPA to consult the electorate in order assess and review the special arrangements for those areas. The delay in running local elections means that these popular consultations may take place after a secession, potentially weakening the case for improvement.

The NCP is still seeking alliances with other parties – it has always sought to broaden its base, recognising that it is a minority party (even if these elections say different). It continues to be the party that decides the future of Sudan – and if Sudan is divided peacefully, will shape the political future of the North. What choices does it have? Nafi' ruled out an alliance with al-Turabi, although a rallying of Sudan's divided Islamists might be an obvious route to creating a sense of nationhood in the deeply divided North. Or the party could use the confidence that it received from the elections to be conciliatory, rather than cocky, with adversaries and victims: opinion is divided on which path the NCP will choose. Another possibility is that the NCP could package itself as the only political possibility in Sudan, the There Is No Alternative Party, the invincible alliance of state and capital that will never ever go away. In order to do this, it needs to develop structures that allow it to resolve the many divisions of the North within the party. From that perspective, the elections were a disappointment. The NCP landslides mean that nobody knows what anyone is really thinking – the NCP could have won with the benefits of incumbency, but emerged with more legitimacy and a better and more public record of who wants what where.

After the elections, a senior opposition politician was told by a senior-looking security man that the security forces have got the real results of the elections as well as the public ones. That might mean that the NCP at least has got a reading of the strengths and weaknesses of different political actors in Northern Sudan. Let's hope the security man was not just being cocky.

Note on contributor

Edward Thomas worked in Sudan for about six years as a teacher, human rights worker and researcher, and is based in London.

Notes

1. '*nafi': fawz majmu'a salfa kir sayuqawwi al-ta'awun min ajl al-wihda*' (Nafi': the victory of the Salva Kiir group will strengthen cooperation for unity) [online], *Sudanile*, 17 April 2010. Available from: www.sudanile.com [Accessed 20 April 2010].
2. See for example World Bank, *Darfur: dimensions of challenge for development*. World Bank: Washington, DC, 29 June 2008, pp. 158–159.
3. International Crisis Group, *Rigged elections in Darfur and the consequences of a probable NCP victory in Sudan*. 1CG: Nairobi/Brussels, 30 March 2010. Available from: http://crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/sudan/b072-rigged-elections-in-darfur-and-the-consequences-of-a-probable-ncp-victory-in-sudan.aspx [Accessed 19 August 2010].
4. '*al-turabi yaltaqi bi-mumathilin lil-nazihin bi-shimal darfur*' (Turabi meets representatives of the displaced in North Darfur), *Ray al-Shaab*, Khartoum, 6 April 2010, p. 1.
5. 'SPLM chairman Salva Kiir casts his vote for Bashir' [online], *Sudan Tribune*, 18 April 2010. Available from: www.sudantribune.com [Accessed 20 April 2010].

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The extraversion of protest: conditions, history and use of the 'international' in Africa[1]

Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle*

Département de science politique, Université Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne, Paris, and Centre européen de sociologie et de science politique (CESSP), Paris, France

The growing number of international causes and an intensification in the establishment of transnational networks in Africa are expanding a chain of interdependency which links an ever-larger and more diverse set of actors from North and South. It therefore seems relevant to revisit the debates of the 1990s concerning the dependency of 'African civil society' with regard to the North, through the concept of 'extraversion' within the political spaces of sub-Saharan Africa. First, it is argued that the conditions and effects of this internationalisation of protest actors are contradictory. Access to the international sphere is subject to two forms of competition: social and political. While universally determined by socially selective skills, such access also provides a vehicle for social ascension. Meanwhile, in the specifically African context, it is the object of intense political battles, representing as such both a 'refuge' and a resource, as well as a new source of coercion. Secondly, it is suggested that the specific modalities of relationships between actors from North and South tend to reproduce existing inequalities, with the effect that northern models of protest (in terms of both themes and tools) ultimately win out in African spaces. Finally, similarities in modalities of implementation, in vocabulary, in the skills demanded by internationalised mobilisations, and in the political and economic reforms introduced by external actors, lead to the hypothesis that these transnational mobilisations contribute to a reforming authoritarianism, that is to say to the implementation of reforms which depoliticise social and political issues and reproduce the established order. By repositioning mobilisations with access to the international sphere within the history of African political spaces, the concept of extraversion thus allows consideration of their impact as agent of both emancipation and domination.

Keywords: mobilisation; Cameroon; internationalisation; extraversion; collective action

Analysis of the collective mobilisations of the 1990s has been dominated, and to some extent obscured, by debates over the relevance of the concept of 'civil society' and over the role and practices of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Africa (Hearn 2001, Poncelet and Pirotte 2007). One of the sociological tenets of this debate (which also became a political position) was the existence of a social disconnection between externally oriented NGOs and those in whose name they claimed to speak (Van Rooy 1998). As a result of these criticisms, this particular aspect of the relationships of externally institutionalised protest groups (NGOs, trade unions, confessional groups) underwent a

---

*Email: mepommerolle@free.fr

transformation which deserves further attention. Often urban and professionalised, these groups sought to reconnect with their 'base' to relegitimise themselves and counter criticisms of social disconnection (Igoe and Kelsall 2005). In so doing, they extended the chain of interdependency linking actors in the North (donors and international NGOs) and the South (from NGOs to small groups of peasants, young people and others). Moreover, the increasing number of transnational advocacy networks and associated forums (particularly the World Social Forum), involving actors from North and South, or the various Souths, again raised questions regarding the relationship between actors, who are clearly unequal in terms of material resources, but who have mobilised around the same 'causes' and are seeking to erase all trace of potential inequalities. The objective of this paper is to revisit, within the African context, the contradictory conditions and effects of this growing internationalisation of protest actors.

The internationalisation of mobilisations in the South has been attributed either to international causes being imported (according to varying sociological principles [Ropp *et al.* 1999, Dezalay and Garth 2002]), or to local organisations seeking out international actors, but limited by their unequal resources (Bob 2001). In both cases, the international relationships of the political spaces under discussion, and *a fortiori* of the mobilisations which animate these spaces, have been insufficiently critiqued, or scarcely adapted, to the sub-Saharan context. Using the concept of the extraversion of African political spaces (Bayart 1999, 2006) provides a way of bypassing the sterile argument between promoters of an international civil society and those critical of the neocolonialist grip of international actors over some African protesters (Pouligny 2001). Revisiting the historical inequality which has characterised exchanges between Africa and the rest of the world, Jean-François Bayart remarks that, 'the dominant actors in sub-Saharan society have tended to compensate for the difficulties they face in achieving self-government and intensifying the exploitation of their dependants by deliberate recourse to extraversion strategies which mobilise the resources procured through their – possibly unequal – external relationships.' This external space was also sought out, in turn, by 'social struggles conducted by subordinate actors' (Bayart 1989).

Three aspects of this 'dependency as mode of action' can be considered as particularly important to an understanding of the external relationships of protest actors. First, access to international space is the object of a struggle between those who hold power and those who contest it. Even beyond the social resources they require to do so, mobilised actors have been obliged historically to fight the powers-that-be for permission to go overseas or return if they are there already (education or exile). The function of gatekeeper (Cooper 2002) exercised by the colonial and post-colonial state, and the fact that the state derives its sovereignty (and in part its legitimacy) from its monopoly of external relationships (Clapham 1996) have defined the frequently uneven relationship between 'counter-elites' and this international space.

Second, the international sphere should not be viewed as external to national political space – it is, in fact, a constituent part of it (Bayart 2006, p. xxvii). In real terms, this means that numerous foreign organisations (embassies, cooperation agencies, international NGOs, religious missions and so on) are present on national territory, and that the various mobilisation organisations (trade unions, confessional associations, NGOs and others) are encouraged to seek regular meetings with these foreign bodies, normally in an urban setting. This superposition of international and local spaces within a single geographical setting makes it possible to observe the disconnection (or not) between spaces normally considered as geographically distant, and the social distance (or not) created by their linkage.

Finally, while emphasising the strategies of actors, the concepts of extraversion presupposes the concept of dependency and inequality: inequality between governments in North and South, but also in the relationships between northern protest movements (or the organisations which support them), whether active in Africa or in Europe/United States, and those of the South. Northern actors bring access to international media, international arenas, material resources and contacts. They determine which techniques of mobilisation will be considered legitimate and effective, and provide training and assistance. Southern actors clearly instrumentalise these unequal relationships; the great value of the concept of extraversion is that it provides a means of 'thinking about dependency without being dependentist', by restoring to dependent actors their capacity for action (Bayart 1999).

This paper will use the concept of extraversion, and examples from Cameroon and Kenya, to revisit the political and social effects of the internationalisation of protest actors in Africa. Internationalisation is the product of specific historical trajectories but is not simply reducible to the hazards of individual histories. This article presents the hypothesis that, in both North and South, the extraversion of mobilisations produces (and reproduces) inequalities in the relationships of mobilised actors. Extraversion also has contradictory social and political effects. International mobilisations use the same tools and demand the same set of skills as the political and economic reforms promoted by international donors, and in so doing participate indirectly in the creation of a reforming authoritarianism (Dabène *et al.* 2008). Moreover, by allowing changes in some social hierarchies, this same internationalisation also plays its part in significant local transformations.

To explore these contradictions, the paper will begin by recalling the varying intensity and historical diversity of the relationships of extraversion characteristic of those sub-Saharan political spaces considered here. It will then observe the concrete relationships which actually developed between French and Cameroonian protesters working in the same cooperation project. Working from the hypothesis that these transnational relationships were structured by inequalities, the paper will concentrate on the mechanisms adopted to address these inequalities and associated issues. It suggests that this particular mobilisation reproduced the relationship schemas typical of relationships in the 'development' world, and that its outputs became depoliticised. Finally, the paper will attempt to show how the concept of extraversion can be used to understand the interactions between international mobilisations and transformations in both state power and society.

The historicity and specificity of extraversions

The internationalisation of mobilisations in Africa is not new (Cooper 2001). However, it is important to go beyond the historical roots of this phenomenon and examine the particular historicity of the external relationships of contemporary protest actors: in effect, relationships of extraversion were constructed historically and differed according to region, thus structuring spaces of international mobilisation which are far from homogeneous throughout the continent.

History and geography of extraversion in sub-Saharan Africa

The origins of the extraversion of African countries clearly do not lie in colonial rule,[2] yet the political spaces created in colonial times have developed and maintained a privileged – and unequal – relationship with the colonial power or *métropole*, and later the former colonial power. The last 20 years have been marked by a more intense extraversion of the continent which, according to region, has either created possibilities of external access for protest actors and/or forced these possibilities upon them (Bayart 2006).

Colonial authorities in Europe and Africa formed the target of political and trade union action – often led by African actors temporarily resident in the heart of empire, occasionally supported by 'metropolitan' organisations receptive to the cause of colonial emancipation (Donnat 1986, Derrick 2008). Some anti-colonial movements turned towards the new international decision-making spaces like the United Nations (mandate and tutelage cases: see Smouts 1979 on Cameroon and Togo); or, in the early 1960s, towards certain 'Third World' and/or socialist regimes (for example, Ghana, Egypt and Guinea) which welcomed opponents of the colonial powers and of their newly independent successors. Even after independence, some activists kept the former colonial power in their sights: accusations of neocolonialism, especially in the space of francophone Africa, were supplemented by the writings of *tiers-mondiste* intellectuals condemning power structures still directed largely from overseas. The former colonial powers remain a target today, in the form of demands for a 'second independence' (for example, among the *Jeunes patriotes* in Côte d'Ivoire), and of legal actions brought against African and/or European authorities both for recent crimes and those committed in the colonial past.[3]

Within their own frontiers, African rulers did their best to monopolise external relationships and were often successful in doing so. However, in the mid-1980s or at the turn of the 1990s, according to country, ruling elites increasingly became less able to control these links. National actors recovered their freedom of movement, the range of contacts between Africa and the rest of the world grew, and interventions by international actors (bilateral and international donors) increased in number. The availability of international actors intervening both economically and politically in African states had two important consequences for mobilisations. These actors provided campaigners with new targets who could take some of the blame for contemporary social ills – especially given the austerity programmes they imposed. But they also provided individual campaigners and campaign groups with a new resource, notably over promised government reforms concerning 'democratisation' and 'good governance'.

These international actors destroyed the simple two-way relationship between former colonial powers and their colonies, opening the way for new networks of ideas, personnel and know-how. Intervention by American groups (foundations, NGOs and others) – notably around the promotion of democracy (Guilhot 2005) – introduced competition between international actors, allowing African organisations some leeway to impose their own conditions upon projects and grants. The range of international actors operating in Africa distinguished the continent from other political spaces marked by overdependence on the United States. The multiple 'centres of gravity' inhabited by its relationships of extraversion (Saunier 2004) reduced Africa's dependency on the rest of the world, while also making that dependency more complex.

The range of international actors operating in Africa grew not only in nationality but also identity. Religious actors have always played a role in transnational mobilisations; now, however, the increasing prevalence of new Pentecostalist-influenced transnational exchanges offered novel opportunities for external contacts which some movements were able to utilise, in particular in 'moral crusades' against anti-HIV and AIDS policies (Dilger 2009). Trade unions and northern-based international solidarity associations also internationalised and politicised their activities from the 1990s onwards, within the logics of internal competition in the international solidarity field and the framework of the developing anti-globalisation space (Agrikoliansky and Sommier 2005, Bretonnière 2009). These northern actors offered services (funding, technical know-how, inter-personal skills) to their 'partners'. Setting aside for one moment the effects of homogenisation and alienation engendered by this massive – and forced – exposure to the international world in

the very heart of national space, it is important to emphasise some of its other results: compromising the monopoly of international relationships enjoyed by ruling powers; challenging direct relationships with former colonial powers and customary partner organisations; and encouraging a new balance of power between international actors, rulers and local non-state actors.

This brief history of the various layers of extraversion which have accumulated on African soil requires a more detailed comparison of national spaces, and even of regional spaces within a single national entity. Some spaces form exceptions: South Africa, for example, and to a lesser degree Nigeria. Anglophone Africa is covered by a variety of transnational networks which in general provide more channels of external access than are available in the francophone space. For example, Scandinavian and American cooperation agencies were attracted to anglophone East Africa very soon after independence. Opening up this anglophone space to horizons wider than those of a single relationship with the former British Empire undoubtedly created, or at least supported, new possibilities for mobilisation. Another differentiating factor is that some countries – for example, Sierra Leone, or the Democratic Republic of Congo – experienced sudden and massive exposure to external intervention, notably in post-conflict contexts.

The histories of external relations also range widely within a single national space: for example, micro-spaces such as parish churches and missions enjoy privileged relationships with their counterparts in the North capable of influencing the success of particular movements. On a different scale, some regions enjoy privileged relationships with international actors which can affect potential mobilisations and their modalities. Two examples from Cameroon indicate the possibilities of links based on linguistic or historical affinities: unknown in most of the country, George Soros' Open Society Initiative for West Africa until recently operated only in the South-West province, while a number of small American confessional organisations are active only in the North-West province.

However, historical links certainly do not all share equal prominence, and still less equal legitimacy, in the contemporary national space. Mobilised actors can find it hard to justify their external relationships when these become controversial between governments and their opponents. While international access can represent a path to emancipation and recognition, it can also be a stigmatising factor: a great deal depends upon the balance of power between government and opposition, on the profile of the external actors, and the type of link concerned. International recognition, such as the award of a prize, is viewed positively;[4] so too are appeals to the international arena (for example, Ruben Um Nyobé arguing his case before the United Nations Assembly General [Mbembe 1985]). In contrast, seeking refuge overseas (exile) or enjoying financial benefits from abroad can be a disadvantage to African actors, by turning too harsh a spotlight on their dependency on their overseas counterparts.

These general remarks highlight the necessity of clarifying exactly what is at stake in particular spaces of mobilisation. While all extraversion relationships are unequal, they do not comprise the same actors or practices; nor do they share the same meaning. To examine them further, it therefore becomes necessary to address the particular trajectories of specific mobilisation spaces.

The individuality of transnational spaces for mobilisation

In constructing case studies of some transnational spaces, this paper will first outline the way specific links developed between North and South, and describe who and what moved between them (Siméant 2010). It will also detail the inequalities (in material

resources, information, personal relationships and inter-personal skills) which structured these spaces, producing dependency but also a margin for manoeuvre. Two comparisons will be used to show that inequalities underlying these transnational spaces expressed themselves in a variety of ways, and that some actors are able to use these inequalities to their own advantage. The first examines a single cause (that of human rights) in two different national spaces (Kenya and Cameroon); the second looks at two different types of mobilisation (human rights and food sovereignty) within a single national space (Cameroon).

While human rights was 'queen' among causes within transnational spaces during the 1990s, its success (in the sense of individual actors and mobilised groups obtaining a hearing from the authorities and attracting international attention to the issue) was not universal. Everywhere, rulers came under heavy pressure from their overseas partners on this issue, at least at the level of discourse and conditionalities. The conditions underlying the emergence and take-off of human rights activism in Kenya and Cameroon can only be understood through the relatively recent development of linkages between local and international actors. From independence until the early 1980s, human rights – as a group of norms universalist in vocation and sanctioned by international law – were seldom mentioned in either of these countries.[5] In the case of Cameroon, two groups attempted to mobilise selectively behind this banner: the Catholic Church (within the country); and individuals 'exiled' (often voluntarily) in France, who were supported by left-wing political groups and associations. But while the national church tempered its criticisms from the early 1970s on, links between the 'exiles' and human rights organisations in the West became problematic. This is illustrated by the case of author and essayist Mongo Béti, who was expelled from the French section of Amnesty International after describing some of its members as 'agents infected by French imperialism'.

Politicised Cameroonians in France, closely linked to the Communist Party, used the language of ideology to take control of a protest impossible in Cameroon itself, something which clashed with the 'neutral' register adopted by Amnesty International and the *Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme* (FIDH), and later by Human Rights Watch. In Kenya, Amnesty preferred to collaborate with lawyers and churches, who were more measured in their language and who possessed skills demanded by international organisations (for example, the gathering of accurate information and the use of legal language). The presence in Kenya of Scandinavian and American donors whose cooperation policies were linked to human rights also highlighted the issue there. By the early 1990s therefore, the concept of human rights had developed differently in the political spaces of Kenya and Cameroon, both in legitimacy and in meaning, because the concept was used by different socio-professional groups in the two countries. These separate historical trajectories in part explain the unequal contribution made from the 1990s onward by the Kenyan and Cameroonian human rights movements, not just to the international space, but also to the development of their respective political spaces of protest.

The patchy history of the human rights cause in Cameroon does not imply that any form of movement with external links (in aims, themes, methods, and so on) was doomed to failure. The successful campaign against the import of frozen chicken in 2004 and 2005 illustrates the conditions of extraversion and its specific effects within each space for mobilisation. This campaign took members of Cameroon's *Association citoyenne de défense des intérêts collectifs* (ACDIC) to the European Commission, the German parliament and the headquarters of the World Trade Organisation. Its 'success' (the Cameroon government took action to reduce imports) was partly due to its theme, the issue of 'food sovereignty'. This gave the campaign a nationalistic appeal which brought it a ready hearing, and grounded it in an economic and agricultural expertise

with few overt political overtones. But two other factors may also have contributed to its success: a historically wide range of external relationships, which allowed the movement to create space for manoeuvre important to the conduct of its campaign, and its capacity to mobilise local actors.

The campaign was launched by ACDIC, an organisation created as the 'political arm' of the *Service d'appui aux initiatives locales de développement* (SAILD), one of four 'historic' development NGOs in Cameroon (Interview, senior ACDIC official, Nairobi, 22 January 2007). Although based in Cameroon, SAILD is actually a Swiss legal NGO which from the start enabled ACDIC to link up with a number of overseas partners – *Fédération genevoise de coopération*, Oxfam France–*Agir ici*, the German Protestant *Evangelische Entwicklungsdienst* (EED) and the Belgian *SOS-Faim* – so providing it with a wide range of resources in terms of funding and contacts. While ACDIC has placed particular emphasis on its international activities (participation in the World Social Forum and the ruling council of the African Social Forum, in addition to the partnerships cited above), it has not neglected its work with local contacts. A SAILD official gave an account of ACDIC's work with members of Cameroon's National Assembly, which demonstrates the importance of circulating repertoires of action; ACDIC organises dinners for members of the Cameroon parliament in the same way that it did for European parliamentarians. However, his account also highlights the role played by local networks and some practices (paying an official acting as go-between, for example) which oil the wheels of relationships between actors (parliamentary and associative) who would otherwise seldom come into contact.

It should be noted that the spaces for mobilisation formed by northern and southern actors do not all allow the 'dominated' party the same margin for manoeuvre. Nevertheless, the structure of these relationships tends toward the reproduction of inequalities.

Inequality in practice

The article will now consider a recent Franco-Cameroonian project; designed to 'strengthen civil society' and the 'counter-powers' in Cameroon, a project that links non-state actors in France and Cameroon with the French ministry of foreign affairs (MAE), which funded it. This project can be considered an extreme case and as such is of interest for two particular reasons. It brought together unequal, and sometimes antagonistic, actors: on one side, trade unions and associations, both Cameroonian and French; on the other, a French state often viewed as a major supporter of the Cameroonian regime. Yet, at the same time, it sought to overcome these inequalities by setting up decision-making mechanisms which greatly advantaged the Cameroonian 'partners'. Looking beyond the stated aims and the premature closure of this project (after serious accusations of personal enrichment on one side and paternalism on the other), it is worth examining more closely how cooperation between militant actors from North and South worked on the ground, and thereby identify the mechanisms which reproduce inequalities.

The history of a pilot programme of cooperation between French and Cameroonian activists[6]

With only two presidents in 50 years of independence, Cameroon's political stability makes it an attractive place for international cooperation agencies (bilateral and multilateral) and non-state actors from the international solidarity movement (religious or secular). Colonised by three empires (Germany, France and Great Britain) and officially bilingual,

the country maintains privileged relationships with a wide range of international actors, who use it as their regional headquarters or as a place to experiment with different types of reform and cooperation. Through debt relief programmes, cooperation agencies play a significant role in defining political and economic reforms, and thus by extension the issues which lead non-state actors, both local and international, to mobilise. This applies particularly to the French MAE. As part of its *Contrat développement désendettement* (C2D), the MAE took the decision (unprecedented in light of its traditional statist approach) to support counter-powers in Cameroon (Otayek 2004). After preliminary studies and a pilot phase, the *Programme concerté pluri-acteurs* (PCPA) started work in 2006, bringing together French and Cameroonian non-state actors (international solidarity associations and trade unions).

This self-consciously 'innovative' programme reflected a combination of separate interests, French and Cameroonian. The change in approach by the MAE resulted in part from pressure exerted by French associations and trade unions, seeking to change French cooperation policies while simultaneously strengthening their 'partnership' with African groups. For the *Comité catholique contre la faim et pour le développement* (CCFD), the leading French non-state actor in this project, this reflected a dynamic established in the 1990s; French trade unions, meanwhile, wanted to revive their historic relationships with their southern counterparts (Wagner 2003). The *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT), for example, had developed strong alliances with nationalist actors in Cameroon (and many other countries) during the 1940s, but these relationships had weakened over the years. Today, the trade unions are seeking instead to develop their international activity via cooperation with NGOs, to restore their legitimacy and insert themselves in the anti-globalisation movement.

The Cameroonian actors involved in the PCPA also had a variety of interests in the programme. Caritas Cameroon or the *Bureau d'action socio-caritative* (BASC), the development arm of the National Episcopal Conference, was the project coordinator in the country. BASC had been reorienting its activities since the mid-1990s, adding the influence of public policy to its original development work. The increasing involvement of its *Service Justice et Paix* in 'political' activity and of some of its officials in the transnational networks campaigning for debt reduction contributed to policy changes within the Episcopal Conference. In addition to BASC, there were other Cameroonian actors with a prior involvement in international collaborations – albeit limited in some cases. Some human rights, AIDS and anti-corruption organisations, for example, saw this project as a way of strengthening their international engagement and securing funding. Others, notably *CGT-Liberté* and the *Centrale des services publics* (CSP), the two union groupings involved, saw the programme as a unique opportunity to access effective means of action. Because both of these are two minority groupings – the first is the product of splits in the old trade union linked to the ruling party, and the other is a collection of new public service unions – they had been effectively excluded from existing clientelist networks.[7]

The PCPA was thus something of an innovation in Cameroon, where donors regularly complained how difficult it was to find 'credible interlocutors' within 'civil society', because it intervened at the point where the interests of engaged actors converged. It did not amount simply to the imposition of a northern programme on the South, or of a donor on a group of beneficiaries. Its internal decision-making mechanisms – and the tensions these produced – reflected issues surrounding the submission of South to North, a reversal in power relationships that was agreed so as to seek to overcome perceived inequalities, and from the instrumentalisation of those inequalities.

Conflict between French and Cameroonians over questions of project governance began as soon as plans for the PCPA were finalised. According to the latter, it set them against all the French participants (NGOs, unions and the ministry). Adopting a familiar rhetoric condemning French paternalism,[8] the Cameroonian actors eventually gained control of the PCPA and its concrete implementation. They negotiated the modalities step by step – and in the end these differed from similar mechanisms adopted elsewhere (for example, the PCPA in Guinea). The eventual failure of the PCPA in Cameroon was later attributed by some French actors to their removal from the decision-making structure. They argued that the 'ownership' of the project – a concept nevertheless fundamental to the language of cooperation – was ultimately harmful to it. The EU-financed *Programme d'appui à la structuration de la société civile au Cameroun* (PASOC), which succeeded the PCPA in 2009, has returned to a type of decision making closer to the usual model of North–South cooperation: the project owner is Cameroon's *Ministre de l'economie, de la planification et de l'aménagement du territoire* (MINEPAT), and the project leader is a French consultant.

Bureaucratisation and choice of campaigns

As a publicly funded body, the PCPA had to establish systems of 'governance' and decision making, allowing it to select mobilisation projects and ensure effective financial management. These mechanisms also had to accommodate a desire to involve the largest possible number of 'civil society' actors. As it proved difficult to establish satisfactory criteria for representativeness, the mechanisms eventually selected were based on the position of 'broker' already occupied by certain actors (see below). The aim of the PCPA was to support any Cameroonian organisation wishing to speak on political, economic and social matters – not just those involved in setting up the project. However, some of the original participants assumed positions as brokers or intermediaries, acting effectively as gatekeepers to the project, and the decision-making mechanisms initially adopted by the PCPA simply reinforced their role (Olivier de Sardan 1995). Rationalising the mechanisms of participation in this way tended to facilitate an efficient approval process rather than promoting new initiatives; it also shaped the modalities of protest.

Similarly, membership of the PCPA's governance structure was not determined by election at the annual general meeting – the representativeness of which could also be questioned. Instead participants who had demonstrated their interest and engagement 'naturally' found themselves offered a place. Similar concern can be found over the legitimacy of those members of 'civil society' involved in the steering committee of PASOC. The programme identifies three components of 'civil society':[9] trade unions, associations and confessional groups. As far as the unions are concerned, a network of smaller unions, run by officials with experience of donor relationships, was selected as the most 'representative'. For the associations space, the criterion used was 'informal approval' by a majority of partners. Both experiences testify to the closed nature of circles of recruitment within 'transnational networks'.

While the aim of PCPA was to support Cameroonian organisations in their mobilisation, it was not itself an actor in those mobilisations. It therefore needed mechanisms to select the campaigns it would finance or support. Two contradictory types of requirement underlay these systems of selection – management-related (the need to control finances) and political (the wish to involve a wide range of mobilised actors) – and, in short, these considerably reduced the freedom of action available to actors. The main campaigning themes had been determined upstream of the programme at the time of the initial fact-finding study, and these

repeated the established concerns of transnational collective action: AIDS, human rights, debt and corruption. The choice of actions conducted around the 'human rights' issue reveals how the PCPA operated, using bureaucratic mechanisms and a smokescreen of consultation to impose modalities of protest. The leader of the group, a long-time partner of CCFD, suggested creating a human rights 'observatory'; the decision went in his favour, sweeping aside the many doubts expressed during consultative meetings by actors who favoured more direct action, or who were anxious not to place artificial limits on the areas where they might intervene. An exploratory mission was despatched to meet with 40 organisations in four different provinces, but the project as finally implemented closely resembled that originally proposed.[10] The dictating of themes and the general orientation of activities is a constant feature of externally generated projects (Van Rooy 1998). Participatory mechanisms neither prevent nor mask such logics.

The repertoire of advocacy privileged by 'transnational networks' reveals even more clearly the logic underlying the process whereby issues and modes of activism are imposed. Defined as an 'alternative expertise', advocacy is considered vital in ensuring credibility in the eyes of the authorities and has become essential to southern organisations. By establishing advocacy as the only valid means of mobilisation, northern organisations have created a real instrument of control over their southern counterparts. In addition, as is made evident below, mastery of this repertoire has become a criterion used by the authorities to decide whether or not to accept requests. For donors, international organisations and the state, it has become a primary instrument of selection. The current PASOC programme only finances (and therefore heavily promotes the organisation of) meetings and training designed to develop 'expertise'. PASOC's own documents repeatedly emphasise that this 'expertise' is expected to be 'alternative' and should not set itself up 'against' official expertise (European Union–Government of Cameroon [EU-GOC] 2009). In defining advocacy, PASOC draws an explicit contrast with 'militant activism':

> Far from simple grassroots activism, advocacy is first and foremost a capacity whose deployment requires a real alternative expertise based on rigorous thinking and the identification of best practice in CSO [civil society organisation]-led development. (PASOC 2010)

However, in a contradictory logic, the projects studied here wished to encourage a professionalised advocacy that was nevertheless founded on an ethos of grassroots activism and morally motivated voluntarism.

Demands for the professionalisation of volunteering: the 'double bind'

The issue of material inequalities and relationships to money in 'transnational networks' has seldom been considered in the analysis of the transnationalisation of collective action. Studies of the World Social Forum (WSF) held in Nairobi in 2007 show the importance of the material dependency of African delegates in understanding the logic of their participation in this event, and more generally of their intervention in 'networks' of this type (Pommerolle and Siméant 2010). The Nairobi example shows, in particular, how relationships to money could lead to controversy in transnational spaces for mobilisation (Haeringer and Pommerolle 2010). Some members of the WSF international council and 'radical' activists flaunted the ethos of voluntary and impartial activism, in contrast to what they characterised as the commercial, if not 'corrupt', orientation of some local groups. This idea of an inevitably biased southern activism which needs ridding of corruption (enabling it to conform to northern models of disinterestedness and voluntarism) is clearly expressed in a report on the PASOC project:

> The funding regime for consultative meetings within civil society, and for statutory meetings and campaign meetings within the structures themselves, was decided by ballot. To ensure an ethos of voluntary activism and prevent the pursuit of per diems, PASOC will only meet the costs of transport, secretarial services, room hire and the expertise to be mobilised. It will not pay for accommodation and subsistence. (EU–GOC 2009)

In summary, the requirements of this type of cooperation – building capacity in 'alternative' expertise, while promoting a disinterested, and therefore, voluntary brand of activism – reveal two orders of contradiction. These in essence seem to espouse a logic which is hard to sustain, that activism should be professionalised, but at reduced cost. The first of these contradictions is that expertise, while activist in ethos, should be non-confrontational. The second is that actors should be professional, but materially disinterested. This demand for an activist ethos – based on a suspicion about the motivation of local actors – was concretely expressed by the withdrawal of allowances and/or payments likely to lead to the material and moral destruction of cooperation projects in general.

While blatant material inequalities continue to exist between mobilised actors in North (salaried and volunteer) and South, professionalisation thus has to be implemented, but at a reduced cost. Such inequalities – often implicit – underpin all these relationships. For example, a member of a Cameroonian organisation recalled that, during preliminary studies undertaken prior to the implementation of the European programme, Cameroonian organisations condemned the proposal of a €10,000 monthly salary for its director: whether true or not, this figure, and the opposition to it, reflect the sense of injustice provoked by the flagrant inequalities between northern and southern actors in supposedly 'activist' projects. Always present as a subtext, the issues of material inequalities and demands for voluntarism – amounting to contradictory demands for professionalisation – are vital to understanding why transnational projects of this type find it so difficult to build a long-term future.

Some of these projects of 'transnational activism' display more generally the logics of 'bureaucratic populism'. Vacillating between the opposite poles of participation/membership and bureaucratic rationalisation, 'bureaucratic populism' marked the development projects of the colonial and post-colonial eras (Chauveau 1994). 'Beneficiary' peasant populations, who were then 'asked' to participate in meetings costly to them in terms of time and work lost, resemble today's trade unionists and association members – young people, 'pressurised' officials and freelance journalists – who are forced to attend training events on debt reduction and the techniques of advocacy. Like their predecessors, these actors are forced to demonstrate a kind of loyalty to these controlled activities. The extraversion of mobilisations thus produced spaces for practice similar to those of development projects or state reforms. The similarity between these logics explains why studies of the extraversion of mobilisations can lead to a broader understanding of the modalities of reforming authoritarianism in many African countries.

Reforming authoritarianism and local social dynamics

Encouraged by the exchange of good practice between sectors, this similarity of practice in areas of state reform, development and the strengthening of civil society has also had the paradoxical effect of increasing the influence of government. Governments remain capable of confining reform to predetermined sectors (Dezalay and Garth 2002), and of choosing their interlocutors through the selection, circumvention and censure of mobilised actors.

The issues that are common to state reformers, NGOs and mobilised trade unions – debt, AIDS, corruption and human rights – are chosen so as to allow dialogue. Resultant reforms

in these areas are certainly granted by governments, but these are normally subject to all kinds of trade-off and often fail to meet the original demands of the movements themselves (Bayart 2006, p. xxxviii). Empirical studies of the implementation of administrative reforms, in particular, emphasise the capacity of states to confine institutional changes to 'bureaucratic enclaves', or restrict them to new institutions designed to satisfy the demands of the international community (Eboko 2001, Darbon 2003, Bergamaschi 2009, Samuel 2009). Some non-state actors mobilised in such campaigns help establish such institutions and/or are later recruited to them. The circulation of individuals between NGOs and donor-financed institutions of this type has also helped to create a common set of practices which once again conflates spaces of state control and spaces of protest.

Yet the fact that these reforms and institutions are articulated in a shared language does not necessarily mean that the actors concerned understand them in the same way, or assign the same meanings to them (Vairel 2008). The fight against corruption provides one such example. The travails of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority and the former president of the local branch of Transparency International – who became the Kibaki government's anti-corruption 'czar' before finally becoming exiled in Great Britain – reveals a great deal about the nuanced, indeed divergent, expectations and meanings of states, donors and mobilised actors in regard to a particular theme of mobilisation and public action (Lawson 2009, Wrong 2009). The vast anti-corruption operation conducted in Cameroon since 2006 has also been invested with different meanings by the different actors engaged in it (Vallée 2010). Anti-corruption operations are a means of satisfying international requirements and rationalising administrations, but they also provide a way of removing potential political adversaries. These operations have encouraged some associative groups to take action; however, over-enthusiasm for change among such groups beyond the limited reforms permitted by government can thereby make them an object of repression.

The authorities can also call on the techniques used by international actors to prohibit some mobilisations, modify others, and continue to negotiate in a clientelist and/or corporatist mode with mobilisations which are unconnected to these extraverted sectors (for example drivers of taxis that are often owned by politicians) (Eboko 2009). The imposition of advocacy as the only legitimate and effective mode of protest removes other forms of mobilisation from the range of possibilities. In Cameroon, protest meetings, even those of modest size, are rarely permitted. The use of this particular repertoire of protest is historically linked in Cameroon to mass movements – the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) in the 1950s, the multi-party protests and the 'Ghost Town' protests in 1990–91, and the riots of February 2008. It is delegitimised by government – and in turn by associative, trade union and religious actors – as synonymous with violence (most frequently linked with repression). The focus on advocacy and expertise has thus served only to confirm existing restrictions on the repertoire of activism available to campaigners in Cameroon.

International campaigns which do succeed in making themselves heard, like some of the PCPA-supported campaigns, are likely to upset someone in authority – whether public or private – and suffer from indirect destabilisation as a result. The failure of the PCPA is illuminating in this regard. The logic of competition – between associations and trade unions – over the improper solicitation of resources has been suggested as the principal reason for this failure. Nevertheless, it is clear overall that the demise of the PCPA finally allowed the Catholic Church hierarchy to regain its hold over the BASC. Granted autonomy by the PCPA, the BASC had for some years been accumulating resources (mainly financial), as well as providing a focus for campaigning. Some members of staff resigned after

rumours circulated at senior levels within the organisation that they were personally bene-fiting from these resources. After a prolonged period of pressure, the director of the Catholic *Service Justice et Paix* (which took a close and critical interest in the conduct of elections in its role as a local election observer) also resigned.

When mobilisations achieve a certain size or can no longer be controlled by established means, coercion and intimidation are used on a case-by-case basis (Amnesty International 2009). In Cameroon, this is apparent in the detention and trial of members of ACDIC in 2008–2009, and of a journalist who had taken part in an international 'ill-gotten gains' campaign (FIDH *et al.* 2009). The vulnerability of mobilised actors in Cameroon is com-pounded by their legal insecurity: nearly 20 years after 'freedom laws' were enacted, the status of associations, NGOs and trade unions remains unsettled. In addition, opponents can be sidelined by the state by their own relationships with external donors. Some local actors, financed by Cameroonian donors, are ultimately considered to be more of a desta-bilising influence than their external counterparts, who may agree to negotiate more limited reforms. The establishment of an independent electoral observatory in Cameroon is just such an example of these strategies of control: co-opting 'civil society' actors, sidelining those whose views are too extreme, importing a project from outside, and diluting insti-tutional reform through political manoeuvring: after years of local, mostly failed initiatives, an externally funded, independent electoral management body, ELECAM, was created in 2006. Ultimately, 11 of the 12 members of its management board nominated by the Presi-dent, belong to the ruling elite of the party in power, or are very close to it (Belibi 2008).

Extraversion and local social dynamics

The internationalisation of mobilisation (whether in terms of theme, funding or media cov-erage) also produces local transformations which provide opportunities for certain social groups. When donors fund salaried positions, the external financing of projects leads to changes in the professional, and therefore social, characteristics of those recruited to these posts. A brief examination of the internationalisation of activist careers shows that this is not a uniquely elitist dynamic; it can also have a marked effect on the career path of some internationalised individuals (Siméant 2007, Latourès 2009). Beyond the dynamics of personal advancement produced by internationalisation, the resultant changes in the social composition of activist recruitment have produced reconfigurations in national and local social hierarchies. Favoured by the voluntarist policies encouraged by donors, women have elevated themselves to the top of a number of NGOs. The case of Kenya's 'human rights or democracy' NGOs makes this clear. In the late 1990s, women were quasi-absent in these organisations or still confined to subordinate posts; since then, they have moved into leadership positions or important positions as administrators or pro-gramme officers. Gender politics certainly counts for something here, but the primary cause lies in the career path followed by these women, and their attainment of professional qualifications – in parallel to the process of NGO professionalisation. It is thus not the female 'activists' of the 1980s who dominate this sector, but instead well-qualified women with a previous professional career. They have displaced the actors involved in the various political movements of the 1980s who, at the turn of the 1990s, saw NGO employment as the only opportunity to achieve professional success, given their previous political activism. If the extraversion of mobilisations has effectively favoured certain social groups by allowing their social advancement, it is because it has simultaneously devalued other characteristics and/or skills of those who are consequently demoted in the social scale or when opportunities for promotion present themselves.

The 'return to base' of urban NGOs accused of having become disconnected from their constituents (referred to above) is visible principally in the more extensive relationships they have developed with mass-based and local groupings. It is also apparent in their recruitment of 'community' and 'youth' leaders, and of social workers (responsible for social work in disadvantaged parishes, for example), who bring their experience of popular mobilisation to NGOs otherwise run by technical experts and intellectuals. These new policies have considerably extended the pool of recruitment in social terms – even if new career opportunities subsequently bring changes in lifestyle to these new recruits. The international orientation of the youngest recruits (those who joined such organisations at the point when the extraversion of mobilisations intensified its dynamic) has created new categories in local social hierarchies.

This can be seen, for example, in the internationalised careers (in the sociological sense) of young Catholics in the far North of Cameroon, a region dominated politically and socially by the Muslim Peul ethnic group. Christian churches have been trying to convert young people there since the 1940s, principally through development and education projects. At the time of the PCPA, the two leaders of BASC came from this area. Both had started their careers in local church-based development bodies and had benefited from training financed by them. They went on to enjoy startlingly internationalised careers, including several professional trips abroad. First, social advancement of this type did not necessarily encourage the individuals concerned to disconnect with their social origins. One of the BASC leaders set up an *association d'originaires* in Yaoundé to provide education and training for future generations from his particularly isolated region. The localised and ultimately autonomous effects of these internationalised careers must be emphasised. Yet based as they are in individual as well as long-standing social and historical dynamics, these careers are also striking in their fragility. While one of the BASC leaders has since begun a career as an international consultant, the other has been the target of destabilisation campaigns within the church, and has had to resign his post. The dependency of these careers – on donors but also on local power relationships from which donors are not disconnected – should not be ignored.

Conclusion

Thinking about the power relationships between mobilised groups in Africa and their international partners (donors and NGOs) always carries the danger of magnifying the importance of mobilisations led by urbanites, professionals and 'disconnected' intellectuals, and minimising the importance of other types of actors (peasants, the young urban unemployed, mine- and plantation-workers and others). At present, however, the growing number of international causes and an intensification in the establishment of transnational networks in Africa are expanding the chain of interdependency which links an ever larger and more diverse set of actors from North and South. It therefore seems relevant to make use of empirical observation and an approach centred on the concept of extraversion within the political spaces of sub-Saharan Africa to revisit the debates of the 1990s concerning the dependency of 'African civil society' with regard to the North. The uses made of Africa's dependent relationship with the rest of the world – highlighted by the concept of extraversion – encourage the reconsideration of the validity of some of the conclusions suggested by previous studies. First, the conditions and effects of this internationalisation of protest actors are contradictory. Access to the international sphere is subject to two forms of competition: social and political. While universally determined by socially selective skills, such access also provides a vehicle for social advancement. Meanwhile, in the specifically African context, it is the object of intense political battles, representing as such both a 'refuge' and a resource, as

well as a new source of coercion. Second, the concrete modalities of relationships between actors from North and South tend to reproduce existing inequalities, with the effect that northern models of protest (both in themes and tools) ultimately gain ascendancy in African spaces. Finally, similarities in modalities of implementation, in vocabulary, in the skills demanded by internationalised mobilisations, and in the political and economic reforms introduced by external actors, lead to the hypothesis that transnational mobilisations contribute to a reforming authoritarianism (Dabène *et al.* 2008), i.e. to the implementation of reforms which depoliticise social and political issues and reproduce the established order (Ferguson 1990). By repositioning mobilisations with access to the international sphere within the history of African political spaces, the concept of extraversion thus allows consideration of their impact as agent of both emancipation and domination.

Note on contributor

Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle is senior lecturer at the *Université Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne*. She works on collective action and political reforms in Africa, with a focus on Cameroon and Kenya. She is the co-editor of *Politique africaine*.

Notes

1. This article was translated for *ROAPE* from the original French text by Margaret Sumner. Email: maggie.sumner@googlemail.com
2. The slave trade offered some elites a privileged opportunity to capture the external resources they needed to guarantee their internal power (Thornton 1998).
3. See for example the action brought by former Mau Mau fighters, victims of torture, against the British state; or the affair of the 'ill-gotten gains' denouncing the assets of the presidents of Gabon, Congo and Equatorial Guinea, especially in France.
4. Even if such recognition might encompass certain contradictions; for example, a young Kenyan human rights activist, claiming links with the Mau Mau movement and using its revolutionary arguments, receiving the Reebok Human Rights Award, a prize awarded by the American multinational.
5. Anti-colonial mobilisations which expressed demands for political emancipation in vernacular language, relying sometimes on international law (notably the case with some of the discourses of the *Union des populations du Cameroun* in the 1950s), are not discussed here.
6. An insider's view of the programme was gained during the first semester of 2006 through participation in some *Programme concerté pluri-acteurs* (PCPA) activities in Cameroon. Informal conversations have since been held with some of its officials, Cameroonian and French.
7. Interviews on 21 December 2005 and 25 January 2006 with the leader of each of these union *centrales*, Yaoundé.
8. To a Cameroonian, it was obvious that the principles of partnership had been flouted: 'a (French) trade unionist used an unfortunate turn of phrase in this regard: "We did it for your own good." We replied as follows: "Without us is against us." … We're extremely sensitive to issues of equality in relationships' (Interview with one of the Cameroonian PCPA officials, Yaoundé, 27 February 2006).
9. Available at http://www.pasoc-cameroun.org/index.php?file=Page&name=Comite_de_pilotage [Accessed 8 July 2010].
10. This observation does not call into question the work of the Observatory which, in particular, produced a report on the riots of February 2008 and their suppression (*Observatoire national des droits de l'homme* [ONDHC] 2009).

References

Agrikoliansky, E. and Sommier, I., eds., 2005. *Radiographie du mouvement altermondialiste*. Paris: La dispute.

Amnesty International, 2009. *Cameroun: l'impunité favorise les atteintes constantes aux droits humains*. London: Amnesty International Publications.

Bayart, J.-F., 1989. *L'état en Afrique. La politique du ventre*. Paris: Fayard.

Bayart, J.-F., 1999. L'Afrique dans le monde: une histoire d'extraversion. *Critique internationale*, 5, 97–120.

Bayart, J-F., 2006. Préface à la nouvelle édition: 'Comme vous en Afrique' ou l'hégémonie dans l'extraversion. *In: L'État en Afrique. La politique du ventre*. Paris: Fayard, iii–lxviii.

Belibi, J.F., 2008. Elecam – aux couleurs du RDPC. *Mutations*, Yaoundé. 31 décembre.

Bergamaschi, I., 2009. Mali: patterns and limits of 'donor-driven ownership'. *In*: L. Whitfield, ed. *The new politics of aid: African strategies for dealing with donors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 217–45.

Bob, C., 2001. Marketing rebellion: insurgent groups, international media, and NGO support. *International Politics*, 38 (3), 311–334.

Bretonnière, B., 2009. *La coopération syndicale franco-africaine. Inerties et dynamiques d'une solidarité ouvrière*, Mémoire (Master 2). University of Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne.

Chauveau, J.P., 1994. Participation paysanne et populisme bureaucratique: essai d'histoire et de sociologie de la culture du développement. *In*: J.P. Jacob and P.Lavigne Delville, eds. *Les associations paysannes en Afrique, organisation et dynamiques*. Paris: APAD/Karthala.

Clapham, C., 1996. *Africa and the international system*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cooper, F., 2001. Networks, moral discourse, and history. *In*: T. Callaghy, T.R. Kassimir and R. Latham, eds. *Intervention and transnationalism in Africa. Global–local networks of power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 23–46.

Cooper, F., 2002. *Africa since 1940: the past of the present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dabène, O., Geisser, V. and Massardier, G., eds., 2008. *Autoritarismes démocratiques et démocraties autoritaires au XXIè siècle. Convergences Nord–Sud*. Paris: La Découverte.

Darbon, D., 2003. Réformer on re-former les administrations projetées des Afriques? Entre routine anti-politique et ingénierie politique contextuelle. *Revue française d'administration publique*, 105–106, 135–152.

Derrick, J., 2008. *Africa's agitators: militant anti-colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918–1939*. London: Hurst & Company.

Dezalay, Y. and Garth, B.G., 2002. *The internationalization of palace wars. lawyers, economists, and the contest to transform Latin American states*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Dilger, H., 2009. Doing better? Religion, the virtue-ethics of development, and the fragmentation of health politics in Tanzania. *Africa Today*, 56 (1), 89–110.

Donnat, G., 1986. *Afin que nul n'oublie: l'itinéraire d'un anticolonialiste: Algérie, Cameroun, Afrique*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Eboko, F., 2001. L'organisation de la lutte contre le sida au Cameroun. De la verticalité à la dispersion. *In*: M.-E. Gruénais, ed. *Un système de santé en mutation. Le cas du Cameroun*. Hamburg – London: Lit Verlag Münster.

Eboko, F., 2009. Cameroun: acteurs et logiques des émeutes de 2008. *In: État des résistances dans le Sud*. Bruxelles: Syllepses/Centre tricontinental, 53–57.

European Union–Government of Cameroon, 2009. Devis-programme N° 2 du Pasoc, [online]. Available from http://www.pasoc-cameroun.org/pieces_jointes/Devis-Programme-2-PASOC.doc [Accessed 8 July 2010].

Ferguson, A., 1990. *The anti-politics machine: 'development', depoliticization and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

FIDH *et al.*, 2009. Menaces à l'encontre de Jean-Bosco Talla, journaliste camerounais, [online]. 2 July. Available at http://www.fidh.org/Menaces-a-l-encontre-de-Jean-Bosco-Talla [Accessed on 15 August 2010].

Guilhot, N., 2005. *The democracy makers: human rights and the politics of global order*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Haeringer, N. and Pommerolle, M.-E., forthcoming 2010. The WSF at test: extraversion and controversies during the World Social Forum in Nairobi. *In*: J. Sen and P. Waterman, eds. *Facing the future: the World Social Forum, the global justice movement, and beyond*. New Delhi: OpenWord Books.

Hearn, J., 2001. The 'uses and abuses' of civil society in Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, 28 (87), 43–53.

Igoe, J. and Kelsall, T., eds., 2005. *Between a rock and a hard place: African NGOs, donors and the state*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.

Latourès, A., 2009. Je suis presque féministe, mais. . .. Appropriation de la cause des femmes par des militantes maliennes au Forum Social Mondial de Nairobi (2007). *Politique africaine*, 116, 143–164.

Lawson, L., 2009. The politics of anti-corruption in Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 47 (1), 73–100.

Mbembe, A., 1985. La palabre de l'Indépendance: les ordres du discours nationaliste au Cameroun (1948–1958). *Revue française de science politique*, 35 (3), 459–486.

ONDH [Observatoire national des droits de l'Homme], 2009. *Cameroun – 25–29 février 2008: une répression sanglante à huis clos*. Available from: http://www.liberationafrique.org/IMG/pdf/Rapport_Cameroun_ONDH_fevrier_2009-2.pdf [Accessed 15 August 2010].

Olivier de Sardan, J.-P, 1995. *Anthropologie et développement. Essai en socio-anthropologie du changement social*. Paris: APAD-Karthala.

Otayek, R., ed., 2004. *Les sociétés civiles du Sud. Un état des lieux dans trois pays de la ZSP: Cameroun, Ghana, Maroc*. Paris: Direction générale de la coopération internationale et du développement, Ministère des affaires étrangères.

PASOC, 2010. *Call for proposals setting out guiding principles of the programme* [online]. Available at http://www.pasoc-cameroun.org/pieces_jointes/Lignes_directrices_FR.doc [Accessed 8 July 2010].

Pommerolle, M.-E. and Siméant, J., 2010. African voices and activists at the WSF in Nairobi: the uncertain ways of transnational African activism [online]. *Journal of World Research System*, 16 (1), Available at http://jwsr.ucr.edu/archive/vol16/Pommerolle_Simeant-vol16n1.pdf [Accessed 8 July 2010].

Poncelet, M. and Pirotte, G., 2007. L'invention africaine des sociétés civiles: déni théorique, figure imposée, prolifération empirique. *Mondes en développement*, 3 (139), 9–23.

Pouligny, B., 2001. Une société civile internationale? *Critique internationale*, 13(October), 120–176.

Ropp, S., Risse, T. and Sikkink, K., eds., 1999. *The power of human rights: international norms and domestic change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Samuel, B., 2009. Les cadres stratégiques de lutte contre la pauvreté et les trajectoires de la planification au Burkina Faso. *Sociétés Politiques Comparées*, 16.

Saunier, P.-Y., 2004. Circulations, connexions et espaces transnationaux. *Genèses*, 57, 110–126.

Siméant, J., 2007. S'engager dans l'internationalisation: trajectoires de participants africains au FSM. *Un forum social mondial en Afrique: Nairobi 2007 – Causes africaines et extraversions militantes*, study day, 5 October, Paris.

Siméant, J., 2010. Transnationalisation de l'action collective. *In*: E. Agrikoliansky, O. Fillieule and I. Sommier, eds. *Penser les mouvements sociaux. Conflits sociaux et contestations dans les sociétés contemporaines*. Paris: La Découverte.

Smouts, M.-C., 1979. *La France à l'ONU. Premiers rôles et second rang*. Paris: Presses de la FNSP.

Thornton, J., 1998. *Africa and Africans in the making of the Atlantic world, 1400–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vairel, F., 2008. L'opposition en situation autoritaire: statut et mode d'action. *In*: O. Dabène, V. Geisser and G. Massardier, eds. *Autoritarismes démocratiques et démocraties autoritaires au XXIè siècle. Convergences Nord–Sud*. Paris: La Découverte, 213–232.

Vallée, O., 2010. *La Police morale de l'anticorruption. Cameroun, Nigéria*. Paris: Karthala.

Van Rooy, A., 1998. *Civil society and the aid industry*. London: Earthscan.

Wagner, A.-C., 2003. La coopération syndicale franco–africaine face aux ambiguïtés de 'l'internationalisme des travailleurs'. *In*: Y. Lebeau, B. Niame, A. Piriou and M. de Saint-Martin, eds. *Etat et acteurs émergents en Afrique. Démocratie, incivilité, transnationalisation*. Paris/Ibadan: Karthala-IFRA, 213–229.

Wrong, M., 2009. *It's our turn to eat. The story of a Kenyan whistle blower*. London: Fourth Estate.

BOOK REVIEW

Development and the African diaspora: place and the politics of home, by Claire Mercer, Ben Page and Martin Evans, London and New York, Zed Books, 2008, 258 pp., £18.99(pb), ISBN 9781842779019

The idea and practices of place-based home associations have gained considerable attention over the last two decades. Within the large body of work on the relationship between migration, diaspora and development, few studies have explored the intricacies and complexities of migration from a critical geographical perspective inspired by historical materialism. This book makes an important contribution in that direction. Drawing insights from the critical geography of David Harvey and others, Mercer, Page and Evans examine the wider politics of the relationship between development and diaspora in the context of Africa. Their study explores these broader themes through an examination of the developmental activities of four home associations in Bali and Manyu in Cameroon and Rungwe in Tanzania. In framing their questions on the link between migration and development, the authors underline their concern with 'the relation between places, the politics of uneven development, the distribution of resources and questions of justice' (p. xii). According to the authors, the burgeoning interest in the 'migration-development nexus' is mainly due to the perceived 'developmental benefits' of migration and 'increasing realisation of the scale of international remittances and the associated puzzle over the impacts of this money' (p. xi).

The book is divided into four sections. The first part considers conceptual questions regarding migration, development and diaspora in the fields of Development and African Studies. Migration mainly 'treats the movement of people as the agglomeration of the rational acts of individuals governed by the logics of incentives and opportunities. "Diaspora", however, with its association with the strange dialectic of simultaneous flight from and longing for home, foregrounds questions of emotion and desire' (p. 51). Drawing on critical geography and post-colonial theories of culture, identity, place and belonging, the authors argue that we cannot simply treat diaspora as another category consistent with the dominant conceptualisation of development. Rather, in the context of Africa, the developmental work carried out by diasporic home associations 'challenges core assumptions about space and agency that are deeply embedded in development studies epistemology' (p. 52).

The second section focuses on the structure and character of four home associations in Tanzania and Cameroon, and traces their colonial and post-colonial history. The historical inquiry shows that factors such as territory, migration, faith, labour, ethnicity and geography played an important role in the formation of early associations. The third section addresses the activities of the associations and analyses their critical interventions in the area of welfare activities. The idea of 'sociality' plays an important role here: the authors suggest that 'welfare provision by home associations emerges from and is intimately linked to their role as sites of sociality' (p. 134). These associations make progressive interventions in the areas of education,

health, water supply, and other social services. The idea of modernisation of the home place is also central to their activities. However, modernisation is viewed as 'indigenization' with an emphasis on 'tradition' and 'culture'. Some of the associations try to modernise the traditional practices of burials by establishing modern mortuaries, which in turn leads to changes in the 'timing of burial' (p. 168). The idea of conservation has also created some enthusiasm in terms of renovation of cultural objects and monuments.

The concluding section evaluates the structure of home associations and their capacities in the spheres of politics, development and policy making. Though the capacity to mobilise resources for public goods is limited in comparison with donor agencies and government, their potential goes beyond material gains. The authors argue that the real importance of these associations should be understood in terms of their capacity to challenge the 'existing definitions of development through their investment in projects that would not be normally included under mainstream development as defined in Western development discourse' (p. 228). Moreover, home associations often compel local elites to intervene and mobilise resources for developmental works. In the realm of policy making, the authors do not agree with the idea of imposing regulations upon the home associations but argue that they should retain their autonomy.

One of the important criticisms against these associations' engagement with the 'politics of culture' and 'place' is that this often produces some narrow mentalities and patrimonial elements in their respective societies. By rejecting the conventional wisdom, the authors give some hints regarding the inherent rationalities of modernisation theory and its failure to understand the dialectic of these categories in Africa. For example, modernisation theory often viewed one's attachment to his/her place as an impediment to societal progress and irrational. The authors critique this idea by showing the progressive potentialities of these associations in terms of their capacity to challenge the 'oppressive practices surrounding widowhood and witchcraft accusations' (p. 232).

The idea of African diasporas as an 'untapped source of resource' for development has been embraced by both theorists and policy-makers in various countries. However, there are some serious problems with this kind of an understanding which often fails to pay enough attention to the complexities of their operational logic. Many of these discussions about diaspora have been based on a simplistic understanding of rational-economic calculations. This kind of reductionist view obscures the complex dialectic of national/international migration, their interaction with dominant social relations, and corresponding development patterns.

The central argument underpinning the book is that it is imperative in migration-development discourses to consider the distinctive nature of the African diaspora, its complex dialectic in terms of place, culture, ethnicity and language, and its relationships with dominant social relations. The book is well informed, with its arguments thoroughly based on detailed field research corroborated by insights from critical geography and political economy. The volume is a valuable and critical contribution to the growing literatures on migration, diaspora and development studies in the context of Africa. Its major strength lies in its ability to link theoretically and analyse empirically the critical interventions of home associations, thereby making a strong plea for a distinctive understanding of African diasporas in both academic and policy literatures.

Reviewed by Chandran Komath
Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
Email: komathchandran@gmail.com
© 2010, Chandran Komath

BOOK REVIEW

African land questions, agrarian transitions and the state: the contradictions of neo-liberal land reforms, by Sam Moyo, Dakar, CODESRIA Working Paper Series, 2009, vii + 159 pp., £18.95, ISBN 978-2869782020

The land question has recently attracted renewed interest in the political agenda of several African countries and international organisations, while from a different vantage point the resurgence of peasant movements as well as urban mobilisations in Latin America, Asia and Africa makes explicit the escalating contradictions over the control, access and use of land. In this book Sam Moyo explores, through a variety of rich empirical case studies, the *political* relevance of land questions in Africa. The author locates land questions and the preceding process of dispossession as the fulcrum of colonial capitalist patterns of domination and exploitation. Moyo moves beyond the classic 'agrarian question', understood in terms of the transformation of social relations of production and property in the countryside with the advent of a capitalist mode of production. Through a more complex and multilayered approach he exposes the interaction of different variables of class, nation, gender, patriarchy, race and ethnicity in shaping the theoretical outlines of African land questions and the trajectories of agrarian transitions. He defines two main forms of transition emerging from distinct paths of accumulation and domination 'from above and from below'. The former may be identified in settler-dominated areas, especially Southern Africa, where

patterns of dispossession and accumulation were more extensive and historically destructive for African peasantries and their social modes of political authority and economic organisation. Here colonial dispossession, although never complete, reached its most brutal forms. In West Africa, in contrast, diverse structures and patterns of landholding emerged from local agrarian power differentiation which encouraged local elites to amass large landholding amidst growing land scarcities and landlessness.

Moyo articulates the land questions in terms of massive *unevenness* in the distribution of productive resources, posing the urgency for redistributive land and agrarian reforms. However, while the alarming issue of uneven access and rights to land is of central significance, the author underlines that significant processes of accumulation and exclusion also occur within so-called 'communal' tenure. The theme of tenure (in)security in Africa, of crucial relevance to the majority of smallholders, has a peculiar gender and generational character. While women (and to some extent children) represent the backbone of agrarian economy and society by virtue of their productive and reproductive functions, their role in decision making within the household or community often remains minimal. Moyo's explanation of the process of exclusion of women from property rights and decision making reveals its conflictual nature. He traces the origins of the process within 'traditional' 'communal' African society and its interaction with or subordination to the colonial structure of dominance. The practices of *indirect rule* allowed colonial

masters to decentralise power using the authority of local chiefs. This 'tribalized' African chiefdoms, closing them into confined units in contrast to the greater fluidity, openness and interaction of pre-colonial chiefdoms, while at the same time profoundly altering the nature of women's and youths' roles within communal society. Thus in the case of colonial Natal the creation of the *Native Code* in 1870 undermined the position of women and children, making their subservience to the patriarchs and traditional senior classes stronger and harsher. While male control of women's productive and reproductive power was a feature of pre-colonial institutions and power relations, this was further exacerbated and entrenched under the colonial pattern of domination and exploitation which altered, aggravated and distorted relations between men and women, between patriarchs and youths and between chiefs and subjects.

Moyo puts this framework into dialogue with two additional variables to grasp the *differentia specifica* of African agrarian transitions, investigating the ethnic and regional differentiation and diversification in land access, control and distribution. Here the need for an epistemology of complexity in understanding agrarian transitions is demonstrated. The concept of *invented traditions* is employed to explain how ethnic differences were manufactured, distorted or created *ex novo*, and encapsulated within a hierarchical framework of domination and competition. Following the principle of *divide and rule*, colonial authorities drew artificial geographical lines and borders so as to separate newly created ethnic entities – defined through the racial colonial language of 'tribes' – while at the same time recognising and assigning differential powers to different ethnic authorities. The construction of a mosaic of ethnicities structured by the uneven allocation of land and powers had irreversible consequences for the political stability of post-independence African countries. Examining the case of

Côte d'Ivoire, Moyo explores the politicised character of land in contemporary Africa. Here, through the articulation of the politics of '*ivoirité*', access to and control of land has been closely tied to citizenship. The subordination of citizenship to national belonging, and the exclusion of all people of other nationalities regardless of their rights acquired by virtue of long-term permanence, originated during the French colonial empire and was consolidated in the exercise of Houphuetist rule. Recent conflicts over access to natural resources, with variegated cleavages of ethnic and regional character, further expand the variety of ongoing struggles in the countryside while exposing the limits of discourses and practices of ethno-nationalism.

The last chapter traces the resurgence of rural social movements and their struggles and organisation in relation to land rights and land reform. Moyo envisages the massive participation of rural social movements as the driving force necessary for the implementation of genuinely progressive land and agrarian reforms against neoliberalism. This requires a programme of land redistribution and rural transformation aimed at restructuring existing structures of power and relations of property and production against landlessness, poverty and immiseration of peasants. He is critical of the concept of social change brought about by civil society participation, good governance and transparency. In his view this undermines social movements' radicalism while at the same time establishing the limits to political action within the framework of representation.

This richly researched book recasts the *political* actuality and relevance of *land questions* in Africa. Some critics have argued for a 'solution' of the classical agrarian question of capital in Africa, and for the emergence of an agrarian question of labour. This characterisation is useful as it addresses the issue of chronic labour redundancy, the fragmentation of labour, and the systemic and functional nature of labour migration

in the rural context. However, rather than being 'solved', the emerging processes of resistance among rural communities are, on one hand, redefining the political significance and the persistence of land and agrarian questions in Africa, while on the other, manifesting today the reproduction of fractures and social divisions created during the colonial era.

Giuliano Martiniello
University of Leeds, UK
Email: G.Martiniello04@leeds.ac.uk

BOOK REVIEW

Why planning does not work? Land use planning and residents' rights in Tanzania, by Tumsifu Jonas Nnkya, Dar-es-Salaam, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2007, 360 pp., £33.95. ISBN 9789987449682

In his book *Why Planning Does Not Work?* Nnkya deals with urban land-use planning and residents' rights in Tanzania. In brief, the book is about the politics of urban planning in Tanzania. It is a case study of how the politics of urban planning and the social organisation of space operate and continue to operate in Moshi town, situated in the northern part of Tanzania.

The introduction begins the book by discussing the technical process of urban planning and how it evolved in Tanzania, while remaining chapters deal with various aspects of urban planning as they developed in Moshi. Nnkya begins the second chapter with a thorough discussion of the genesis of the nature and form of the Moshi Master Plan that later became the epicentre of all the problems associated with urban planning. All other chapters that follow are linked to the Moshi Master Plan; for example, chapter three describes how the plan was adopted, chapter four relates the rationale made by officials for the Master Plan, who claimed it is 'for the sake of a good plan', and chapter five presents protests against the so-called 'good plan'. In all the remaining chapters Nnkya attempts to reveal the mechanics of the Master Plan and how it was implemented, put into practice, the social conflicts it generated, and the manoeuvres by officials to address these conflicts. He also exhibits how the officials became torn between safeguarding their own interests and getting legitimacy from the people by pretending that all their plans were in the best interests of the people.

Nnkya argues that the many land-use planning policies were being implemented in the context of the public land ownership policy of one political administrative system and a centrally planned economy (p. vii). According to Nnkya, 'though the public land ownership policy has remained unchanged, certain features of the policy with implications for land-use planning have changed'. On that same page, Nnkya asserts that 'over the past two decades, multi-party political system and market economy have replaced the single-party political system and command economy, respectively.' He maintains that this book deals with the dynamics of urban planning in the earlier political system of a command economy, then promises that his second book (which is yet to appear) will certainly focus on the way the politics of urban land-use planning manifest themselves under political pluralism and a liberal or market-oriented economy.

Nnkya begins by acknowledging that Tanzania is urbanising quickly 'in a situation of very limited capacity to cope with the requirements arising thereof' (p. vii). He strongly contends 'that urban growth is taking place increasingly unguided, regardless of the planning efforts to ensure managed urban spatial change.' A compelling critique asserts that the urban planning of the day is dominated by planners among the technocrats and has completely excluded those affected by

planning decisions. In doing so, this system of land-use planning has disregarded people's land rights as well as the interest of the people. According to Nnkya, 'such a system of planning has ended up creating insecurity of land tenure and investments in land.' Moreover, it has also undermined people's initiative to improve their living conditions and eventually eradicate poverty.

Nnkya's case study of land-use planning in Moshi demonstrates that planning is both a technical and political interactive process involving planners as well as other actors in the political-administrative and judicial systems. He further argues that 'the decisions by the actors are not neutral but influenced by, *inter alia*, their self-interests which are sometimes pursued in the planning system at the expense of the society at large' (p. vii). He labels this form of planning 'technocratic, prescriptive, and non-inclusive'. Nnkya argues very correctly that the outcome of such planning has been people's lack of trust and confidence in the government – certainly with deleterious consequences on land development investments and people's welfare. What Nnkya seems to suggest, albeit indirectly, is that people's participation in urban land-use planning is important and usually yields better results.

At least at the phenomenal level, I am in complete agreement with Nnkya's sentiments concerning people's participation. Whether this is really happening in practice or will ever happen without radical transformation at the level of the dominant ideology are issues that remain to be seen. It is at this juncture that Nnkya and I take separate paths because our understanding of the essential relations that underlie all these problems seems to vary. Nnkya falls into the same problem he stood firm to criticise. He perceives planning as a technical process, and what it only lacks is the 'inclusion of people's voices'. I see things differently. I believe that planning is not neutral from ideology and is not apolitical. In a society divided along class lines, planning reflects the dynamics of class relations and usually tends to serve the interests of the dominant ideology – which in most cases is that of the dominant classes or those in power in society. Certainly there cannot be genuine people-participation in a class society. To assume that can happen is to anticipate that negotiations can take place between a hungry cat and a mouse. Despite the tendency for humans to negotiate, we cannot ignore the desire of those in power to maintain their power and resources. In situations where class relations define class interests, all attempts by the powerful to include the weak in planning are usually aimed at mystifying the reality and cushioning the inherent class contradictions. Certainly the motive is clear – to maintain the *status quo* and postpone the revolution which is likely to bring the power and social justice to the majority. Therefore, people's participation in this social context is mere abracadabra. What Nnkya lacks here is a historical analysis of how all this happened and continues to happen. To understand how these dynamics function in the developing world, and specifically in Tanzania, a historical account that examines the essence of dependent urbanisation is in order.

Over the last three decades, studies of urbanisation in the developing world have become of great interest to scholars of urban planning, human geography, urban sociology and urban anthropology. Interest in this area of study has been motivated by the need to understand the nature and pattern of urbanisation in the developing world which exhibit a contrast to the classical urbanisation that took place in Western Europe. While it can be argued that to a degree the urbanisation process of the West was a slow and gradual process associated with economic growth and social progress as well as a proper system of urban planning, the urbanisation process in the developing world is rapid,

accompanied by a fast process of rural-to-urban immigration causing the rapid growth of multi-million people cities. These factors prompt the mushrooming of spontaneous unplanned settlements of a slum-like nature, as well as squatter residential areas and massive poverty. Furthermore, third-world cities tend to accommodate administrative services rather than industrial production, and are therefore considered parasitic rather than generative. In this case, as opposed to cities in Western Europe, cities in developing countries do not produce surpluses and do not have a reciprocal linkage or economic or productive relationship with their rural hinterland. Instead, developing cities sustain themselves by exploiting their rural areas, facilitating the rapid growth of poverty in the rural areas which further generates a situation of despair and hopelessness for most rural dwellers often initiating rapid rural–urban migration. The rapid urbanisation overwhelms cities with many impoverished migrants, leading to problems with housing, urban planning, and adequate public services including water, electricity, street lights, schools and proper roads.

Some scholars have described this pattern of urbanisation as dependent in nature as it is an urbanisation process dictated by aborted capitalism that penetrated Africa via colonialism. Through the ideology of colonialism, cities were created in order to fulfil and champion the interests and objectives of colonists. African cities were a product of colonial ideology and their purpose was to serve the colonial economy, which created and intensified class differences. The misfortunes of these cities reflected the inequitable class structure in those societies and generated planning patterns that reflected those class relations. Urban planning became a tool through which the interests of those in power were articulated and achieved in terms of urban land-use patterns. One can argue that in the forgoing context, urban planning was not a purely technical process neutral from politics or class ideology, but, indeed, was a tool that was used to facilitate those inequalities and class interests. Sub-Saharan African cities are a product of the legacy described above and Tanzania is no exception.

Most, if not all, cities in Tanzania were planned and built by the colonial government with the objective of serving the colonial economy. Some emerged as administrative centres for colonial rule, while others as ports and commercial centres. Cities often emerged at crossroads or railway lines, and some in mining areas. Many others grew as a result of the role they played in export crops. The physical structure of these cities reflected the logic of colonial mentality and development. Since each colonial economic undertaking was essentially a planned one, even the towns were a product of planning. Towns were designed in such a way that their physical layout reflected the social distances of hierarchical colonial social organisation, allowing domination through racial and class segregation. During colonialism, Europeans lived in attractive suburbs comprised of large and expensive houses with spacious gardens. Streets were maintained and had streetlights. Houses were supplied with water, electricity and modern sewage connections. Golf courses, social clubs and other recreational facilities surrounded these luxurious residential areas.

Unfortunately, independence did not radically transform this legacy. Despite attempts to eradicate the colonial legacy by introducing the concepts of socialism and self-reliance through the Arusha Declaration, the practical implementation of this policy failed. Planning in general, and urban planning in particular, continued to be implemented along the lines and principles set by colonialism. Residential segregation continued unabated.

The first post-independent Master Plan (MP) for Dar-es-Salaam was published in 1968, eight years after independence and

20 years after the former plan was intro-
duced by Sir Alexander Gibb in 1948.
This plan was produced one year after
Tanzania had decided to cultivate socialist
principles, but contrary to that aspiration
they remained neo-colonial. The MP for
Dodoma was published in 1976. It very
closely resembled the MP for Dar-es-
Salaam in several ways. First, they were
both prepared by the same company after
Tanzania had decided to build socialism.
Both MPs recommended Western models
of city planning. However, it is in their plan-
ning of residential areas and provision of
housing that the ideologies of these planning
consultants are clearly revealed. Both plans
identified three types of residential areas in
the city and used the following planning
concepts to describe the nature of these resi-
dential areas: 'high standard', 'medium stan-
dard' and 'low standard'. Contemporary
master plans have replaced these terms
with 'low density', 'medium density' and
'high density' residential areas, respectively.
In plain terms, these planning schemes
represent residential areas for the rich,
middle and poor income people.

It is within this context that we need to
understand the dynamics of urban planning
in Tanzania. This analysis helps us to
understand why planning works the way
it does. The conflicts and politics that sur-
round urban planning in Tanzania are a
legacy of stratified ideology. The struggles
we see happening at the urban level as far
as land is concerned are class struggles
that manifest themselves at the level of
urban land-use planning. The zoning
systems of urban planning, the squatter
upgrading schemes, the site and service
schemes, as well as the slum clearance pro-
grams explain, albeit furtively, both the
nature, form and essence of these struggles.
The grabbing of land owned by the poor in
the name of public interest by those who
are in power in a way helps us to understand
how the ideology of those who are dominant
shapes the political superstructure and
influences the way the state designs its

urban politics and policies. A few years
ago, Tanzanians witnessed former affluent
European residential houses that became
public property at independence being sold
to government officials of the Third
Republic at a knock-down price. These are
concrete examples that help us to understand
that, to assume that the state is there to
articulate public interests is indeed to
assume too much. The state is not non-
partisan, but plays a specific role that is
compatible with the hegemony of the
ideology of the ruling class. As evinced by
the aforementioned role of the state, public
interests are in most cases never a priority.

Nnkya's book lacks this mode of analy-
sis, and as a result, my distinguished col-
league fails to see the role of the state or
government in a neo-colonial society with
a dependent economy. In his own words,
Nnkya asserts that: 'Urban and regional
planning is one of the mechanisms
through which governments intervene in
the change of the built and natural environ-
ment so as to ensure social equity and
justice; orderly spatial development;
safety; efficiency, convenience; and harmo-
nious relation between development and
the environment' (p. 1). The government
also claims to conduct these services, but
in reality they usually have their own
hidden agendas. There is no doubt that the
state in Tanzania is still neo-colonial and
dependent, and the policies it pursues, its
contradictions, and its weaknesses reflect
that legacy. If the government of Tanzania
were actually doing all the positive things
that Nnkya describes above, all the nice
and valid arguments that he presents in
his book would be null and void. Even
the title of his book, if not the book itself,
would be redundant. Additionally, Nnkya
also fails to see that the policies of urban
planning themselves, the master plans and
the ideology behind them (zoning system,
building codes, and so on), are essentially
alien to Tanzania. They have been superim-
posed onto Tanzanian culture and are not a
product of independent, internal social

relations that have been developed by Tanzanians themselves. The plans are a continuation of dependent and neo-colonial policies, playing a specific role in society and serving very well the interests of those in power. It is no wonder that we sometimes see 'ill plans' being labelled as 'good plans'. Also common is to see master plans that promote capitalist values of residential segregation by class, like the one for Dodoma being labelled as 'socialist' in a country that has failed to become a socialist one. With this analysis, one can understand why a country that vowed to build socialism and a new capital city (Dodoma) contracted a firm from a capitalist country – Project Planning Associates of Canada – to design a Master Plan of Dodoma that was supposed to reflect socialist values. It is important to know that all these weaknesses that are inherent in the system of urban planning do not happen by accident, but are a product of contradictions that become manifest in a political economy that has embraced the legacy described above.

Additionally, I want to note that corruption, kickbacks, connections, issues of technical abilities and inefficiency of some government bureaucrats have made the situation worse, as mentioned by Nnkya. There was a time when urban planning was efficient and corruption-free. Surveys of plots and their allocation to people who wanted them were quick and bribes were unheard of. Cities and towns were clean and everyone performed his or her duty for which they were responsible. Since around the mid 1980s, the ethics of doing things has changed in Tanzania. The country has been riddled with corruption, which has penetrated almost all government institutions – including law enforcement institutions like the police and the judiciary – among others. In urban planning we are now witnessing a situation in which getting a building plot in an urban area is a lucrative business venture. Besides paying bribes, one has to be well connected. Even once

one succeeds in getting a building plot, sometimes there are double allocations. Furthermore, navigating government bureaucracy in order to get a title deed and approval of a building plan not only involves official fees, but also bribes, connections and influence. Those who are poor can hardly succeed in such a system. As Nnkya accurately describes, land disputes are common and, due to corruption, they take many years to be resolved. We all know that justice delayed is justice denied, and at the end of the day those who have power, influence and money usually win. All these things reflect the weakness of a neo-colonial state in the era of globalisation. Those who control the economy control both the political life as well as the social life of the majority.

Despite my brief theoretical critique of Nnkya's book, I strongly support *Why Planning Does Not Work?* It is a very powerful piece that provides an ample amount of new knowledge in the area of urban land-use planning. It is a well-written, must-read book from the perspective of an urban planner. This book is not only important for urban planners, but also for other people who are involved in policy planning in Tanzania. I would like to see this book being used in universities that offer courses on urbanisation, rural and urban planning, urban sociology, urban anthropology and development planning in general. What Nnkya has provided in his book is a real, non-fiction account of urban land-use planning. That Nnkya is now Director of Housing in the Ministry of Lands and Human Settlements in Tanzania is a very positive advantage. He will certainly bring the good ideas that he presents in this book to his office in an attempt to change the current momentum in his ministry. If he succeeds in doing so, his ideas will not only remain in the library, but, we, the people of Tanzania, will celebrate his legacy and our fortune to have Nnkya not only as a scholar but also a practitioner. I have no doubt that

everyone will desire this outcome upon reading his fabulous ideas that put the interests of those who lack power and influence at the forefront.

Joe L.P. Lugalla
University of New Hampshire, USA
Email: jlpl@cisunix.unh.edu

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

BOOK REVIEW

Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008, edited by Brian Raftopoulos and Alois Mlambo, Harare and Johannesburg: Weaver Press and Jacana, 2009; pp. xxxiv and 260. £22.95 (pb). ISBN 9781779220837.

This excellent single volume of Zimbabwean history is not only a major contribution to our understanding of the complex relationship between history, nationalism and state power in post-colonial Africa. As a highly effective riposte to the use made by Zimbabwe's rulers of 'nationalist' or 'patriotic' history to justify their dictatorial rule, this study by eight of the country's leading historians (many of them now displaced, with millions of others, into the Zimbabwean disapora) it is also a successful intervention in the struggle for Zimbabwe's future, in which the power to write 'history' is an important weapon.

'Becoming Zimbabwe' succeeds through its scrupulous attentiveness to historical research and in presenting a coherent and accessible narrative that synthesises major historiographical debates and original research in a considered way. The authors constantly emphasise that 'Zimbabwe' is the result of an unpredictable process of historical change, arising from complex interactions between local and external forces. For example, Gerald Mazarire's exemplary summary of the pre-1880 period stresses the extent to which ethnic categories such as 'Shona', which later gained such political salience, had no meaning at this time. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni similarly stresses the

ambiguities and contradictions in African reactions to the imposition of colonial rule. Although his chapter provides a useful summary of the classic debates on African resistance to colonialism, he strongly rejects the tendency of nationalist histories to suppress the diversity of African agency:

> Thus, beneath what Ranger called the 'African voice' subsisted complex African reactions and responses ranging widely from outright resistance to taking full part in the colonial economy as labourers; deploying pre-colonial doctrines of political legitimacy, entitlement and inheritance to contesting colonial dispossession; imbibing colonial claims of civility and fighting for inclusion in the sphere of liberal rights and democracy that were a preserve of white settlers. (p. 69)

There is an instructive (generational) contrast between the younger Ndlovu-Gatsheni's 'post-colonial' approach and Alois Mlambo's more traditional narrative of the period between 1945 and Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. Whilst stressing the diversity of social forces in black Rhodesian society, Mlambo critically assesses African leaders in terms of their contribution to the (ultimate) achievement of self-rule: those who flirted with multi-racial politics in the 1950s, spending time at 'tea parties and public lectures featuring paternalistic whites' (p. 96), are unfavourably compared to those dedicated to the proper business of struggle. More generally, 'Becoming Zimbabwe', whilst effectively discrediting crude nationalist historiographies, is itself torn between the

wholesale deconstruction of a national meta-narrative and the desire to construct an alternative, more inclusive but still 'national' story.

For the UDI period, separate chapters are devoted to 'social and economic developments' and to the war itself, an understandable but rather artificial division, given the evident interaction between the two areas. The authors successfully incorporate recent historiographical work in, for example, their nuanced account of the divisions in the liberation movements and the diverse reactions to the conflict by both black and white Zimbabweans. At times however, more traditional hierarchies are evident, for example, in the claim that "... the idea of the 'nation' had to compete for loyalty with other more parochial interests related to class, gender, religion and ethnicity." (p. 125) – for those involved, 'class' or 'gender' might well be of greater importance than the 'nation'.

James Muzondidya's chapter on the period from 1980 to 1997 similarly suffers from this occasional tendency to assume the centrality of state-building and national development. Whilst ZANU-PF's achievements are worth recording, these were inextricably bound up with an authoritarian project in which the ruling party reserved to itself the right to define the pace and direction of development: as Muzondidya illustrates, attempts by landless rural peasants, urban workers or the Ndebele to pursue their own visions of 'independence' were ruthlessly suppressed. Nevertheless, one of the chapter's great

strengths is to show that at no stage did ZANU-PF achieve hegemonic control over the country's direction. Here, as in many areas of the book, the analysis would have benefited from comparative analysis with the wider African experience of, for example, the contestation of the ruling party's vision of nation-statehood in the post-colonial period.

Muzondidya, like Raftopoulos in his chapter on the period since 1997, emphasises the extent to which ZANU-PF's adoption of economic liberalisation policies in the 1990s contributed to the further impoverishment of rural and urban Zimbabweans and strengthened resistance to its rule. At a time when the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is in unhappy coalition government with ZANU-PF, it is good to be reminded by Raftopoulos of the party's roots in the genuinely insurrectionary atmosphere of the late 1990s, when labour activists and new social movements providing a crucial base for its birth. The frustration of the MDC's rise to power, and the consequent sense of anti-climax with which the book concludes, indicates the challenge of writing the history of a country that is still in the process of 'becoming'. This part of the story will only be concluded when the narratives of a defeated ZANU-PF, both archival and oral, become fully available to historians.

Miles Larmer
University of Sheffield, UK
Email: m.larmer@sheffield.ac.uk