Alternative Report On Africa (AROA)
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## List of participants who validated AROA trial issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Samir AMIN</td>
<td>Third World Forum (Egypt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Morolake Omo. ADEKUNLE</td>
<td>AAWORD - (Gambia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cheikh Oumar BA</td>
<td>Agricultural and Rural Prospective Initiative (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Muhammad BA</td>
<td>University Gaston Berger Saint Louis (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Astronaut BAGILE</td>
<td>AAWORD - (Tanzania)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Malika BENRADI</td>
<td>AFARD (Maroccco)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mamadou BODIAN</td>
<td>Sahel Research Group (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Patrick BOND</td>
<td>Wits University Joburg (South Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fallou Mbacke CISSE</td>
<td>African Governance Institute (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Assitan DIALLO</td>
<td>AFARD - (Mali)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chimère DIAW</td>
<td>African Model Forest Network (Cameroun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Cheikh Tidiane DIEYE</td>
<td>ENDA CACID (Sénégal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Boubacar Boua DIOP</td>
<td>Senegal Social Forum (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nogoye DIOP</td>
<td>AFARD - (Sénégal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mamadou Mignane DIOUF</td>
<td>CIIP PanAfrican federalists Mouvement (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Joomay Ndongo FAYE</td>
<td>PanAfrican federalists Mouvement (Diaspora)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Cheikh GUEYE</td>
<td>ENDA TM / Permanent Secretariat RASA (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>John IGUE</td>
<td>University, Former Minister - (Benin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Aliou KANE</td>
<td>Permanent Secretariat RASA (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Stella LALOYO</td>
<td>AAWORD - (Uganda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sozinho Francisco MATSINHE</td>
<td>CODESRIA (Mozambique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Moussa MBAYE</td>
<td>ENDA TM / Permanent Secretariat RASA (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Mamadou A. MBENGUE</td>
<td>ENDA DIAPOL (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Abdourahmane NDIAYE</td>
<td>Forum du Tiers Monde (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Amadou NDIAYE</td>
<td>Université Gaston Berger (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Oumoul Khayri NDIAYE</td>
<td>AFARD - (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Anthony Victor OBENG</td>
<td>Independent Analyst (Ghana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Sylvestre OUEDROOGO</td>
<td>IPD - AOS (Burkina Faso)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Alioune SALL</td>
<td>African Futures Institute (South Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ebrima SALL</td>
<td>TrustAfrica (Gambia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Felwine SARR</td>
<td>Université Gaston Berger (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Chérif Salif SY</td>
<td>Third World Forum (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Ndongo Samba SYLLA</td>
<td>Rosa Luxembourg Foundation (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Yash TANDON</td>
<td>Former Director of South Center (Uganda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Riaz. K. TAYOB</td>
<td>SEATINI - (South Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Maréma Touré THIAM</td>
<td>UNESCO - (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Jean Philippe THOMAS</td>
<td>ENDA TM / Permanent Secretariat RASA (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Aldiouma SOW</td>
<td>Permanent Secretariat RASA (Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Gilles YABI</td>
<td>WATHI (Benin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Adebayo Olukoshi</td>
<td>International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) - (Nigeria)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

I- Reports on Africa: Main Mirrors of the Dominant Vision of «Development»
   1. Context
   2. Relevance of the initiative

II- Re-conceptualization of «development» by Africa and for Africa
   1. Initial observation
   2. Meaning of this observation

III- In such circumstances, why act and what to do?
   1. What to do?
   2. A methodological, ideological and strategic challenge

AROA’S OBJECTIVES AND APPROACHES

GUIDELINE 1- Africa : from conceptual abstraction to Africans diverse realities
   I- A demanding return to an African centrality of the debate on Africa
   II- Africa and its Diaspora: which alternative articulations?

GUIDELINE 2 : African thought (s) from yesterday to today
   I- From falsification to the rehabilitation of the «Africa subject»
      1. Clichés about the civilizing mission in Africa
      2. Negritude or the cult of intuitive reason
      3. Cheikh Anta Diop: for an Africa between scientific historicity and a continental vision
   II- The concept of «African Renaissance»: thinking out of a new utopia between tradition and modernity

GUIDELINE 3 : Powers and legitimacy: which alternative articulations in Africa?
   The role of leadership in the management of power, governance and democracy in Africa. What alternatives for the future?
   I- African leadership and its impact on power, governance and democracy
      1. African political leaders: from origins to today
         1.1. Traditional leaders
         1.2. Current political leaders
         1.3. Business leaders
      2. African intellectual elites
   II- The current fragmentation of political spaces and its consequences on power, governance and democracy
      1. Fragmentation of political spaces
      2. Fragmentation of historical consciousness
      3. Fragmentation of knowledge
III- Reorganization of power, governance and democracy and renewal of elites

1. Reorganization of political systems
2. Renewal of intellectual elites

If democracy is an external injunction, badly distorted, what kind of governance does Africa need? What do Africans themselves really think about it?

Why and how to rebuild governance in Africa?

1. Challenges related to legitimate governance in Africa
   a) Strengthening the legitimacy of States through articulation between institutional dynamics and the diversity of social dynamics
   a) Strengthening democratic processes and the consensus on the modes of living together
   a) Universal access to basic social services
2. Optimal and sustainable development of the continent's natural resources
3. The search for a better articulation between informal and formal economic dynamics
4. Strengthening regional integration processes
5. Decolonizing the economy of culture to unleash unsuspected potential
6. Contribution to the promotion of a new model of fairer and more sustainable globalization

GUIDELINE 4: Transformative sovereignty and desirable futures: What Africa in the making?

A tough, resilient and entrepreneurial Africa, despite a hostile international environment

1. Illicit financial flows
2. From illicit to licit financial flows
3. Explosion of external debt
4. Public subsidy for private benefits
5. Africa in world trade: rejecting marginalization and broadening policy space for development

1. A continent that «has come from afar»
2. Shattered dreams ... development to be found nowhere
6. Uncompensated depletion of natural capital
7. Land-grabbing, climate change and militarization

A new ideology

1. The popular sovereignty project: the alternative to liberal globalization
2. The choice of a self-centered development is inevitable
3. Monetary sovereignty, key to the SRD

Building a long-term project for an African Renaissance
Given the demographic challenge and technological change, does employment with decent salaries have a future in Africa?

1. Employment in Africa
2. Brief overview of demographic trends
3. What do India and China tell us?
4. With the threat of technological unemployment, where to find millions of decent jobs?
   Information technology in Africa: not to turn it into a new mirage

**GUIDELINE 5 : Measures, indicators, indices: what alternatives?**

1. What are we talking about?
2. How to conceptualize dynamics in Africa?
3. How to conceptualize dynamics in Africa?
4. Development for Africans: What original or specific indicators?
5. Beyond GDP to talk about well-being
6. Make informal economic dynamics intelligible
Executive summary

Africa is considered by the international community as a huge deposit of natural resources, but a weak link in the power networks that rule the world; a continent for ever assisted and ridiculed, Africa also has its Afro pessimists from within, or from its Diaspora, who are using more and more cultural, psychological, social arguments, to explain its so-called «rejection of development», and further lock the continent into vicious circles of poverty. Even though, more recently, international institutions and more and more Western media are expressing more positive views regarding the continent’s progress, its growth rates in a context of global economic crisis, and its comparative advantages, those views are still tinged with condescension and doubt.


Intellectuals, activists and citizens gathered around the Alternative Report on Africa have the ambition to overthrow the sordid and economicist visions conveyed on Africa. AROA intends to be a key initiative that will repair-correct the methodological approach, areas and issues addressed, and deepen and diversify indicators and measurement, but above will be a place where philosophical and ideological analysis on Africa will be reversed.

A self-centered approach based on systemic industrialization and sovereignty over resources and means of production is the answer to the anchoring of an order in which Africa is dependent, and is assigned to a peripheral function in a system that reproduced itself through a systematic control of strategic resources like finance, natural resources, weapons of mass destruction, science and technology, media and communication, the «five monopolies» that constitute the heart of this system. The current debate on emergence refers to a positive vision of catching up, change and growth in competition. Structural change, understood in a very broad sense, is a sum of economic, institutional and structural changes that have contributed to accelerating the process of integration of countries into global economy. This mode of integration into global economy over-integrates the exposed (export) sectors and over-excludes sheltered sectors, geared towards the needs of domestic markets. This shows that the emergence as practiced is a new method of application of the syndrome of the small open economy, the basis of the structural adjustment plans of the 1980s. Growth is real, but it creates inequalities, excludes vulnerable populations and overexploit natural resources.

Reports on Africa: Main reflections of the dominant vision of «development»

Development is an area in which the media create an image for countries and their attractiveness, which are presented as key in a context of exacerbated dependence of the market and international economic rules. International reports and rankings, entirely or partially devoted to Africa, illustrate a policy of economic extroversion and globalized governance that makes decisions affecting countries of the South, and African countries in particular.

These expected reports inspire fear and lead to positive and negative reactions, influence political, economic and social matters in African countries, and help shape the policies and strategies of states and governments.

But, above all, reports on Africa reflect a universalist and linear economism that locks the countries of the continent into laws beyond their competences (WTO), and standardizes indicators to measure social progress.

But, one may ask: Progress for whom, and in what direction? What meaning can development take on, from an African viewpoint? Which Africa(s) are we talking about? What are the guiding principles of economic and social progress? Which ones relate to the happiness of Africans, with which it is relevant to measure progress?

Therefore, the urgency of an autonomous assertion of an African centrality in the discourse on Africa is there.

The added value of the Alternative Report on Africa will help strengthen this autonomy and capacity to think about the future of African societies and countries by defining principles and instruments to measure their progress and help reverse the paralyzing paradigms rooted in African individuals, groups and institutions.

The opportunity seems offered, in this moment of «cards redistribution», of questioning old hegemonies
and emergence of new legitimacies, to position Africa differently from the past, like a respected actor, having a vision of its future, conscious of its dignity and working accordingly on its strengths as on its weaknesses. Future prospects have been described as promising and positive, for a few years now.

African economies have been growing at 5% a year for 10 years, and more than 6% for the past three years. Beyond 8%, this growth is said to begin to significantly impact poverty factors and make development dynamics and social progress sustainable.

Six of the ten countries with the highest growth rates are to be found in Africa2.

In 2017, real GDP growth this still steady, driven by public investment, strong domestic demand for goods, and the strength of the services sector.

Africa seems to have become the normative «new frontier » of the world, the continent that attracts international attention, raises a hope, world-wide that it will create new dynamic and new values.

Between the two visions, one optimistic, the other pessimistic, and forecasts concerning Africa in regards to the global political and economic scene, the reality is undoubtedly more complex, and often far away from its caricatures, overrepresented in international media and institutions, held and sustained by the international community.

Is it the situation that is changing, or the outlook? But, above all, isn’t it time to focus on the way in which Africans themselves feel the progress attributed to them, and on how they build their future in this new context where epistemological landmarks have moved away? Should Africa and Africans not build their own tools for measuring their progress and challenges, based on their own values and realities?

Re-conceptualization of « development » by Africa and for Africa

«Development» is the sacrosanct concept to categorize the world according to economic indicators, defined on the basis of the realities of European countries and North America, to account for their «advancement» or «backwardness», in their march towards economic and social progress. It reproduces the concepts of «center» and «periphery»; of being «advanced» or «backward» that have structured colonial and postcolonial relations.

The conceptual framework for the debate on development has diversified, generating policies and strategies based on the same principles and stakes: «structural adjustment», «poverty and alleviation», «Millennium Development Goals», «Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper», and even more «subtle» meanings such as «emergence», «structural transformation of the economy», which nevertheless mean and embody the continuity of policies to dominate and ridicule Africa.

Development cannot be treated and measured in the abstract for each local situation is unique and can hardly be treated with general procedures and imaginary figures as insignificant as many others». Development cannot remain the myth of a complete Westernization of the world towards cultural uniformity, and the erasing of specificities.

Neither can it build a world order in which self-reflection and freedom of thought are wiped out by a unilateral and pre-defined exemplar that put on a pinnacle free market economy, «modern universal reason», individualism, predation of resources, etc. The concept of «development» is an illusion or even a tricky epistemological question, since Africa has no «catching up» to do; and that what Africa is really suffering from is not the economic «under-development» or the low level of per capita income, but rather its inability to analyze itself by its own categories and produce «its own metaphors for the future».

The dominant paradigms of development have presented growth as the unsurpassable goal that allows the achievement of the well-being of people, and deriving its legitimacy from the trickle-down effect described by Simon Kuznets. However, all over the world, contradictions have increased, broadening the gap between opulence and poverty; between high technology and famine; between markets globalization and social exclusion; between exploitation...
and increasing resources monopolization. These models of development have led to the impoverishment and despair of billions of human beings, in particular in Africa. In response to a globalist injunction, such policies of over-integration and over-exclusion have exacerbated the local/global opposition.

Traditional reports are on a model of production, exchange and consumption that favors the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of an oligarchy; it neglects the sovereignty of peoples, ruins local economies, and causes environmental disasters such as global warming and the loss of biodiversity.

These reports make it possible to classify and forecast measurements made from quantitative indicators that have now shown all their methodological and normative limits. The shortcomings of the so-called «Gross Domestic Product» to measure material progress have compelled international institutions to add new criteria, such as insecurity, inequalities, exclusion, and the Human Development Index (UNDP) which combines the assessment of purchasing power, educational attainment and life expectancy, while defining itself as «a process that allows entire populations to move from a state of extreme precariousness that affects all aspects of their daily life (food, politics, health …), to a safe environment, where, every day, people do not ask, what they will eat the next day; where they can cope with climate change (…) , overcome diseases, live in decent conditions, have the opportunity to express their opinions, and undertake things freely, to improve their own lives and that of their families.

Africa continues to be poorly measured, misrepresented and poorly represented by itself and the others. Statistical systems are not working properly where they exist. There are not enough reliable databases on development or demography, let alone on other dimensions of African life. The gap remains wide between the data produced and peoples’ lives, between theoretical indicators and real situations and practices.

The Alternative Report on Africa is a structuring initiative for new milestones towards the complete decolonization of our minds, our economies and regaining our sovereignty.

The Alternative Report is not meant to be a reaction, but will help assert and shed some light on other paths of positive change already at work in real dynamics. It is also an alternative because it combines expert knowledge and hands-on-experience and gives voice to authentic actors usually invisible and disqualified.

AROA should help establish open processes of knowledge production and appropriation on Africa that constitute levers of change towards the return to a transformation Africa, both in its contents and in its development approach. Its purpose will be to inform, generate and share knowledge, and to motivate those who want to transform Africa. It will be a guiding instrument for action.

AROA is the meeting place for intellectuals, activists and citizens who are called upon to contribute to its production, to reflect the complexity and diversity of the actors who make the continent differently. It is a place of converging expression, analyses and views for all Africans, anxious to refocus an authentic and sovereign thought, and to project it onto the world scene.

The philosophy of the Alternative Report is therefore clear. It stands out in the kaleidoscope of reports on Africa, both in its contents and in its development approach. Its purpose will be to inform, generate and share knowledge, and to motivate those who want to transform Africa. It will be a guiding instrument for action.

The actors gathered by AROA, as watchdogs and activators of a new African breath, will give in this trial issue the guidelines of their philosophy and their vision of Africa in a world in full acceleration. This Africa presented here is the one whose narrations are often anecdotal in classical reports. It is this Africa rehabilitated without concession whose story will be made in AROA.

The proponents of the Alternative Report on Africa have already set the stage for a partnership with research institutions, think-tanks, non-governmental and civic organizations; private and public companies; similar initiatives, African personalities and the Diaspora, in order to build sustainable capacities to create products that reflect the sensibilities and life-experiences of Africans in different environments.

But, at the very time when the relevance and added value of such an alternative report is established, there are major questions about its orientation. Where to look to see the changes at work in a multilevel Africa, and in a complex world? What would be specific African stakes?

3 This initiative is initiated by Enda Tiers Monde, CODESRIA, the Third World Forum (FTM), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Institute of African Futures, the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AFARD), the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Legs Africa, the Panafrican Institute for Development (West Africa and Sahel), the West African Think Tank (WATHI), the Alliance for Reorganization of governance in Africa (ARGA), etc.
What are the relevant units of measurement, and indicators? Where to position Africa in relation to the rest of the world? What is the role of informal actors in the knowledge production process, alongside other stakeholders?

AROA will follow a framework of reference that puts African citizens at the center of the prospect of economic and social progress. It launches a slogan to break with the blind imitation about the path to development, and to rethink the global world from local and personal knowledge, rooted in the culture and vast heterogeneity and diversity of Africa. It must be a component of the efforts to rehabilitate its history, and decolonize its mind; ARO should be an African analytical voice aimed at Africa and by Africa.

The alternative is, first and foremost, what makes us see the hidden drivers of positive and negative developments in Africa. It is what shows how, despite everything, Africans claim to be responsible for their own destiny and future, and strive to create a new reality. In addition, AROA should reflect a different ideological and systemic vision. More specifically, AROA is about the following:

- coming up with a definition of progress for Africa and Africans, closer to their universe and visions of the world, their realities and their practices;
- reporting on societal, economic, cultural, religious, political, and environmental developments and changes that give another idea of Africa being built, and which actually eludes conventional indicators of development and well-being;
- reflecting a vision of Africans in the future, and change to their thought(s) on Africa and the world;
- enabling African citizens and actors to take part in the production of a report that reflects the real life and cultural realities of the populations, by innovating concerning its methods, by setting up a platform for knowledge and information production, by combining scientific, civic, community and popular sources.

Structuring major issues

The report is built on five major issues, according to a multi-disciplinary approach.

The first issue, entitled “Africa: from conceptual abstraction to diverse African realities”, shows that Africa, is at the same time, a concept invented and cast in various representative models, and a potent reality in its geography, history, and demography, and in its cultural, social, economic and political specificities.

Yet, its image of real or supposed unity is perpetuated, without being able to inhibit an extreme diversity that has become one of its most visible markers. Under this component, the Report’s authors explore the system of knowledge about Africa, its various constituents and the Africanity of Africans, and of those experiencing Africa from outside. They also call on Africa and its Diaspora about their past and future articulations, seeking to define the boundaries of Africa, not from its geography or its cultures, but rather from a claim to having the same origins. This component postulates that the relations of the peoples of Africa with those of the Diaspora must constitute a particular area of interest, which requires that they be analyzed separately from Africa’s relations with the rest of the world.

The second theme, devoted to African thoughts, proposes a reflexive approach to the epistemological archeology of thought on Africa and of traditional African thought. Through a diachronic and synthetic approach, it focuses on major cultural, historical, and existential issues that have been raised around the “Africa subject” by European and African thinkers. It closes with questions on the methods of drawing up a social/scientific model, able to emerge on African cultural soil, as an epistemological requirement and as a way leading to well-being and self-fulfillment, in connection with the issue of Pan-Africanism and regional integration.

The third theme focuses on the issue of power and its devolution in Africa. If democracy is an injunction from outside, which has been so misguided, what kind of governance does Africa need? What do Africans really think about it? This insightful questioning should not make us think that the state of democracy represents everywhere, and particularly in Africa, a key to the study and interpretation of the way societies operate, and a determinant of their stability and cohesion.

If democracy is accepted by the international hegemonic system as the only mode from which actors, organizations, institutions define rules and practices to access and keep power; it is far from adequately satisfying the intrinsic values and cosmogonies of Africans. It works as a free-ranging appendage. How to bridge the gap between the processes of running “modern” institutions and those of African societies? How to reinvent them, so that they may be more legitimate? How to strengthen
their ownership by the majority of the populations they are supposed to represent and embody?

The fourth theme discusses prerequisites to achieve desirable futures in transformational sovereignty. According to the authors of this Report, only the project of people’s sovereignty is the alternative to liberal globalization. Indeed, contemporary world capitalism is a complex set of States (independent nations, in principle), peoples and nations (whether «homogeneous» or not), and of social classes defined by the conflictual capital/labor distribution which constitutes the foundation of capitalism. Inter-state conflicts and class warfare are locked into a close relationship of interdependence, an effect of how the various dominant blocs make use of the possibilities they have on the international scene. The resulting idea of global alliances of the dominated classes, capable of creating a «global alternative», is thus confronted with serious obstacles of which we propose an analysis here.

These desirable futures in a transformative sovereignty must also respond to the demographic challenge, since, between 2015 and 2050, African populations will increase by one billion three hundred million inhabitants (50% of the global population growth of 2.4 billion). Between 2050 and 2100, Africa will lead world population growth (128%). At present, its labor force (aged 15-64) is growing every year from 17.5 to 18 million. By 2030, the number of new comers to the labor market will be around 27 million. In general, the potential labor force is expected to double or even triple in 41 African countries, between 2010 and 2050, to reach 1.25 billion. In the face of these demographic trends, the report will explore the possibility of absorbing this growing work force into decent jobs. Far from accrediting “end-of-work” prophecies, we postulate a new distributive paradigm, which is a major challenge at the intersection of demographic and contemporary technological change for twenty-first century Africa. These mutations impact the daily lives of Africans as consumers of contents and means. But apart from some projects and initiatives that are held up as IT successes in Africa (M PESA in Kenya, Manobi in Senegal ...), we are still looking for the real productive dynamics that they have inspired.

Therefore, the trap to avoid is to make a new mirage of them.

The main objective of the fifth theme is to propose paradigms, models, criteria, indicators and calculation methods adapted to African contexts. These methods and tools should allow to combine in an original and innovative way the quantitative and the qualitative dimension, and to lay the foundations for a renunciation of the principle of «global thinking, and local actions», if it means a colonization of knowledge justifying the thought and strategies adopted in the centers of power of developed countries, for the purpose of replicating them in developing countries. But, on the contrary, if «to think global, to act local» can be interpreted as meaning an action undertaken locally, from a sense of belonging and contributing to global dynamics, we would make it ours.

The fact of inventing new instruments of measure is not intended to be part of a technically-oriented approach; nor to turn away from the social, political and economic issues that shape the lives of Africans. On the contrary, it is a matter of shifting our gaze from outside to inside, by clearing new paths in the measurement and characterization of the informal dynamics of the real economy. In addition to the rehabilitation of a socio-economic sector of ecological, social and solidarity-based entrepreneurial initiatives, the objective of AROA is to promote the debates on what is considered of value, the aims of society, the economic orientations and political commitments that it implies. Mostly from the bottom of the pyramid, actors of the informal economy know how to find suitable offers. Based on personal histories, they pursue non-linear trajectories, hold ambitions that deserve to be studied, supported and amplified.

This requires knowledge of their working conditions, and of their institutional, logistical, legal, societal and Technical contraints.
I-/ Reports on Africa: Main reflections of the dominant vision of “development”

1. Context

The contrast is big between the wealth of the African continent and its position, often peripheral and used as a tool on the world stage. Africa is a continent known for exceptional resources and demographic change that puts it at the center of configurations for the future (60% of arable land available but unexploited; important water resources, room for an optimization of the demographic dividend; resources to tap for citizen maturation, and the broadening of the operational base of African societies). Despite these strengths, it remains marked by intellectual, technological and economic dependence, as well as low levels of intra-African trade.

Yet, the world today is at a crossroads with the announced end of the imperial model of assets grabbing and violent competition that has been driving it for several centuries, and the challenging of rich countries’ oligarchic hegemony by the countries of the South, including African countries. This system, which is reproduced by war, predation and the unbridled destruction of the environment, is today confronted with its own contradictions and limits, with large sections of the populations of rich countries rejecting the effects of globalization on themselves and their lives. Inequalities, job losses, vulnerabilities, precariousness, etc. have become unacceptable. This is what compels civil societies to demand a new international order based on a multipolar system, sheer solidarity and redistribution (Bertrand Badie, 2016)⁴. The sovereignty of states and peoples is now undermined by economic and financial forces that exploit them within a self-destructive system and trajectory, in which humanistic cultures and values are tossed aside, or locked into a cycle of impoverishment. The world is facing new challenges linked to technological changes that are destroying jobs and calling into question the issue of industrialization in a context of total dematerialization and financialization, of the economy. More than ever, the crisis of traditional ideologies points to the sole direction the world can follow: fair and sustainable international economy and governance.

Thus, things are changing, and all the actors of the international scene are interested again in Africa, but if it is assured by that to enjoy a vantage position in the future of the world, will it be for the benefit of Africans, in particular of the youths of the continent? If it is necessary to work for it to become an alternative as a real protagonist, respected thanks to its role in the world, it will be necessarily for the continent to recapture its freedom of thought.

2. Relevance of the initiative

Africa’s international image was inexorably linked to poverty, rebellions and wars; crises and recurrent coups d’état, while the internal and external debates on the development of the continent seemed to have been to no avail, for about fifty years. Considered by the international community as a huge deposit of natural resources, but a weak link in the power networks that rule the world; a continent for ever assisted and ridiculed, Africa also has its Afro pessimists from within, or from its Diaspora, who are using more and more cultural, psychological, social arguments, to explain its so-called « rejection of development⁵ », and further lock the continent into vicious circles of poverty. Even though, more recently, international institutions and more and more Western media are expressing more positive views regarding the continent’s progress, its growth rates in a context of global economic crisis, and its comparative advantages, those views are still tinged with condescension and doubt.

“Development” is an area in which the media create an image for countries and their attractiveness, which are presented as key in a context of exacerbated dependence of the market and international economic rules. International reports and rankings, entirely or partially devoted to Africa, illustrate a policy of economic extroversion and globalized governance that makes decisions affecting countries of the South, and African countries in particular. These expected reports inspire fear and lead to positive and negative reactions, influence political, economic and social matters in African countries, and help shape the policies and strategies of states and governments. But, above all, reports on Africa reflect a universalist and linear economy that locks the countries of the continent into laws beyond their competences (WTO), and standardizes indicators to measure social progress. But, one may ask: Progress for whom, and in what direction? What meaning can development take on, from an African view point? Which Africa(s) are we talking about? What are the guiding principles

- Bertrand Badie, 2016. We are no longer alone in the world. Another look at the international order, Paris, Editions La Découverte

of economic and social progress? Which ones relate to the happiness of Africans, with which it is relevant to measure progress?

These questions come at a time when the international context seems favorable, and views on Africa have undergone some change in recent years. Some say that this is the time Africa has been waiting for. There is a shift today from macroeconomic frameworks towards progress driven by human and social dynamics on the continent.

Future prospects have been described as promising and positive, for a few years now. African economies have been growing at 5% a year for 10 years, and more than 6% for the past three years. Beyond 8%, this growth is said to begin to significantly impact poverty factors and make development dynamics and social progress sustainable. Six of the ten countries with the highest growth rates are to be found in Africa. In 2017, real GDP growth is still steady, driven by public investment, strong domestic demand for goods, and the strength of the services sector. Thus, Africa seems to have become the normative «new frontier » of the world, the continent that attracts international attention, raises a hope, worldwide that it will create a new dynamic and new values (Anne-Cécile Robert, 2015)⁶.

Between the two visions, one optimistic, the other pessimistic, and forecasts concerning Africa in regards to the global political and economic scene, the reality is undoubtedly more complex, and often far away rom its caricatures, overrepresented in international media and institutions, held and sustained by the international community.

Is it the situation that is changing, or the outlook? But, above all, isn’t it time to focus on the way in which Africans themselves feel the progress attributed to them, and on how they build their future in this new context where epistemological landmarks have moved away? Should Africa and Africans not build their own tools for measuring their progress and challenges, based on their own values and realities? What would be a definition of “development” for Africa and Africans?

II-/ Re-conceptualization of «development» by Africa and for Africa

«Development» is the sacrosanct concept to categorize the world according to economic indicators, defined on the basis of the realities of European countries and North America, to account for their «advancement» or «backwardness», in their March towards economic and social progress. It reproduces the concepts of “center” and “periphery”; of being “advanced” or “backward” that have structured colonial and postcolonial relations. It is calculated according to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in an approach to measure hierarchies of inequalities on a global and national scale with objectivity and quantitative scientificity.

Without saying more on theoretical controversies intrinsic to the conceptual framework of GDP, namely its vision of the market as the sole device for validating progress, we do know that sociability, solidarity and cooperation give meaning to coexistence, and make ecosystems more resilient. When comparing GDPs, it is astonishing that one should claim to measure living standards and the well-being of populations, as public opinion and public policy makers tend to believe, and make people believe. In fact, today, the conceptual framework for the debate on development has diversified, generating policies and strategies based on the same principles and stakes: «structural adjustment», «poverty and alleviation», « Millennium Development Goals», «Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper», and even more «subtle» meanings such as «emergence», «structural transformation of the economy», which nevertheless mean and embody the continuity of policies to dominate and ridicule Africa.

As stated by Pierre Gourou⁷, development cannot be treated and measured in the abstract: «Each local situation is unique and can hardly be treated with general procedures ... (and) imaginary figures (...) as insignificant as many others». Development cannot remain the myth of a complete Westernization of the world towards cultural uniformity, and the erasing of specificities (Felwine Sarr, 2016). Neither can it build a world order in which self-reflection and freedom of thought are wiped out by a unilateral and pre-defined exemplar that put on a pinnacle free market economy, «modern universal reason», individualism, predation of resources, etc⁸.

The dominant paradigms of development have presented growth as the unsurpassable goal that allows to achieve the well-being of people, and deriving its legitimacy from the trickle-down effect

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⁸ For Ibrahima Thierno Lo in a Facebook post on March 24, 2018: «In the race for development, those who are supposed to have made it see more and more their salvation in coming back to a simpler, more natural life, while those who think they are behind are increasingly seeing their natural wealth, including their faith and culture, as a brake on development. The gap is simply widening.»
described by Simon Kuznets. However, all over the world, contradictions have increased, broadening the gap between opulence and poverty; between high technology and famine; between markets globalization and social exclusion; between exploitation and increasing resources monopolization. These models of development have led to the impoverishment and despair of billions of human beings, in particular in Africa. In response to a globalist injunction, such policies of over-integration and over-exclusion have exacerbated the local/global opposition.

Traditional reports are on a model of production, exchange and consumption that favors the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of an oligarchy; it neglects the sovereignty of peoples, ruins local economies, and causes environmental disasters such as global warming and the loss of biodiversity.

These reports make it possible to classify and forecast measurements made from quantitative indicators that have now shown all their methodological and normative limits. The shortcomings of the so-called «Gross Domestic Product» to measure material progress have compelled international institutions to add new criteria, such as insecurity, inequalities, exclusion, and the Human Development Index (UNDP) which combines the assessment of purchasing power, educational attainment and life expectancy, while defining itself as «a process that allows entire populations to move from a state of extreme precariousness that affects all aspects of their daily life (food, politics, health ...), to a safe environment, where, every day, people do not ask, what they will eat the next day; where they can cope with climate change (...), overcome diseases, live in decent conditions, have the opportunity to express their opinions, and undertake things freely, to improve their own lives and that of their families» (Sylvie Brunel, 1995).

Today, about fifty reports have been produced on Africa. What need is there to produce one more? What added value should the Alternative Report on Africa have in order to justify a large-scale mobilization of African citizens and leaders in its process?

Existing reports relate to many achievements and reveal a growing concern to stick to realities, but most of them do not address the challenges of Africa today:

- by remaining based on a highly stabilized vision of the future when we are living in chaos (the system thus needs deep structural changes);
- by being based on assumptions relying on continual/permanent neoliberal globalization, a system that is almost imploding;
- by using standardized categories without studying the interactions between them, and by clinging to methods that do not really address the way our societies operate, and then fail to respond to real dynamics.

This is how Africa continues to be poorly measured, misrepresented and poorly represented by itself and the others. Statistical systems are not working properly where they exist. There are not enough reliable databases on development or demography, let alone on other dimensions of African life. The gap remains wide between the data produced and peoples’ lives, between theoretical indicators and real situations and practices.

Therefore, the need is there, largely unfulfilled, for an autonomous affirmation of an African central place in the debate on Africa. The added value of this report will be to help strengthen this autonomy and capacity to think about the future of African societies and by defining principles and instruments that can measure their progress, and help reverse the paralyzing paradigms rooted in individuals, African organizations and institutions. In this context of setting things straight, an opportunity seems offered, to challenge old hegemonies and to promote new legitimacies, to position Africa differently from the past, as a respected protagonist, having a vision of its own future, and conscious of its own dignity and working, accordingly, on its strengths and weaknesses.

If it is necessary to translate the recommendations on the complete decolonization of minds and economies into concrete initiatives, and regain Africa’s sovereignty in action, then the Alternative
Report on Africa will be a structuring initiative for new milestones. «Alternative», not in reaction, but in the creation and promotion of other paths to positive transformation already at work in real dynamics; «alternative» also, because combining expert knowledge and experiential knowledge, by giving the floor to authentic actors, usually invisible and disqualified.

AROA is a key initiative to mend/correct the methodological approach concerning the areas and issues addressed, to deepen and diversify indicators and measurements; but, above all, a tool for a philosophical and ideological reversal of analyses on Africa.

AROA should help establish open processes of production and appropriation of knowledge on Africa, that are levers of change for the return to a desire for a future and the desire to reach a common project.

Structural changes will certainly take time. But whatever the time spent, there are two imperatives that will be difficult to ignore: to create a favorable framework for development, and mobilization around a collective project. AROA is designed to help build such a project. To tend towards a future different from our current trajectory, it will no doubt be necessary «to dare to think, to dare to speak, to dare to act». To speak to restore confidence among our societies weakened by long periods of alienation; to think out the ways for a real economic and social development, and to act to influence the decisions that engage the present and the future of our societies.

The philosophy of the alternative report is therefore clear. It stands out in the kaleidoscope of reports on Africa, both in its contents and in its development approach. Its purpose will be to inform, generate and share knowledge, and to motivate those who want to transform Africa. It will be a guiding instrument for action.

1. Initial observation

For a long time, the debate on the situation of Africa and its future resembled an unashamed free-for-all, involving Afro-optimists and Afro-pessimists, but, above all, without much concern for the «truth».

Pessimists, mostly macro-economists, point out that, in the long run, stagnation is what characterizes trends in Africa’s economic development. They point out that, in the ups and downs of African economies, periods of strong growth are rather rare, and mostly due to investments, public or private, in sectors directed primarily towards the production and export of raw materials. Food security is threatened by the priority given to cash crops, making Africa a continent that consumes what it does not produce and produces what it does not consume. Already severely affected by climate change, its environment is deteriorating rapidly, due to the expansion of detrimental extractive industries, and a mining system that literally squanders its ecological assets. As far as sovereignty in the formulation of public policies is concerned, it is doomed to remain illusory. Even if the financing of development no longer relies, for the most part, on the «aid-indebtedness» tandem; African states seem unable to mobilize internal resources. The bankruptcy of Africa, who is presented as a hopeless continent, is part of the leitmotifs of African development experts and analysts.

Today, as if by magic, the ranks of Afro-pessimists are rather sparse, because many of those who spread doom and gloom yesterday and who had built their reputation on the denunciation of Africa’s scourges, have joined the camp of Afro-optimists where they compete fiercely with those they found there. With a blind faith, these new Afro-optimists are championing a new narrative that should justify, in their eyes, a certain measure of «afro-enthusiasm», even of «Afro-phoria». They are talking about Africa who is awakening. “Africa Rising” is now the banner under which those who once stigmatized Africa and regarded it as hopeless are marching.

If we are to believe them, after decades of stagnation, Africa is now fully emerging or, at least, is likely to emerge. These Afro-enthusiasts highlight new African realities that are, in their views, associated with changes and with new dynamics. They indiscriminately highlight the emergence of new social categories, in particular middle classes that would comprise more than three hundred million individuals; a quick dissemination of certain technologies, including the penetration of mobile phones and e-banking; the development of civil society organizations.

But on second thoughts, both Afro-optimistic and Afro-pessimistic positions were caricatures, outrageously simplifying the complexity of African realities, and, at most, half-truths.

Indeed, stagnation has never been total, African farming having been able, despite all, even if it is at the cost of undeniable environmental degradation, to support a significant population growth, and even more significant urbanization.

As for emergence, which would be the good news from Africa, it still is a bit of a holy grail.
Box: Index of the emergence in Africa of OBEMA

In 2018, the Watchdog for Emergence in Africa (OBEMA, 2018), an African think tank based on presuppositions close to AROA’s, published its «Index of emergence in Africa» whose objective is to classify «African countries, according to a new methodological approach, adapted to the realities of the continent».

The authors of the Index, Mamoudou GAZIBO and Olivier MBABIA, argue that there is no clear conceptualization of the notion of emergence that is adapted to Africa, and see in the frenzy common to all African countries around emergence agendas, a purely economic orientation under the influence of markets. Their Index for 2017 combines universal indicators and variables more specific to African reality. But it defines «emergence» only as «a process of sustained economic change that results in social and human achievements, and takes place in a stable political and institutional context that can ensure its sustainability». The thresholds they have defined show that, in fact, «emergence» applies to no African country, not even to South Africa or Nigeria, or Egypt or Kenya. In any case, one must think hard about the meaning – or aim - of these views.

10 OBEMA is the Watchdog for Emergence in Africa.
11 The OBEMA Index developed by Mamoudou Gazibo and Olivier Mbabia on «emergence» shows beyond doubt, that the concept is not workable. Indeed, it is amazing to see that Nigeria is ranked (42nd) behind Niger (41st), The Gambia (32nd) and Liberia (25th)!
12 The results of such a ranking should have alerted the authors of the Index themselves on the unworkable and weak nature of their approach. It is precisely this kind of fallacious argument, because referring to the classic classification that is called into question. The OBEMA Index developed by Mamoudou Gazibo and Olivier Mbabia on emergence shows, if we still need it, that the concept is not operational. Indeed, it is curious to observe that Nigeria is ranked (42nd) behind Niger (41st), Gambia (32nd) and Liberia (25th)! The results of such a ranking should have challenged the authors of the Index themselves because of the nature of their approach (operational and well-grounded). It is precisely this kind of fallacious argument, because referring to the classic classifications; that we dispute.

Map 1. Emergence in Africa
2. Meaning of this observation

These interpretations reflect an order in which Africa is dependent, neglected, and confined to a peripheral function. A trend under which the continent represents a topic for many agencies that belong to an imperialist order, gaining momentum by increasing its control of collective imperialism over the strategic resources involving finance, natural resources, weapons of mass destruction, science and technology; the media and communication, «five monopolies» which constitute the heart of this system, according to Samir Amin (1995)\(^{14}\).

These interpretations are also a reflection of an inherently complex Africa, from which there is always something new \(^{15}\); an Africa which is a complex system and which, as such, is in fact a sum of contra-dictory totalities, but always with something at stake; a system whose constitutive variables undergo parallel evolutions at different speeds. For example,

value systems change rapidly under the influence of education and urbanization, but such change is slower in the case of production systems that remain largely dependent.

These representations are finally the reflection of a complicated transition: we are living the «autumn of capitalism, but not yet the spring of peoples» according to Samir Amin. The old world is in ruins, but the new world is not yet born, and in this «chiaroscuro period», to use the words of Antonio Gramsci, the landmarks are mixed up. For peoples, the only question that arises, the only one that is worth asking, is whether to get out of the crisis of capitalism or out of a capitalism in crisis (Samir Amin, 2009)\(^ {16}\).

III/ In such circumstances, why act and what to do?

Why act? Because we have reached an impasse. «The present has no future». Myriam Revault d’Allonnes made the comment twenty years ago, about energy policies. This comment, which can be extended to development, is even truer today. Even if one wants to be generous and consider that emergence is in the realm of the possible, and that emergence can constitute, for a few countries, a way out of the crisis of capitalism, it remains that the related experiments are not so encouraging.

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14 Samir Amin, 1995, Capitalist management of the crisis, L’Harmattan, Paris
15 Not in the sense of Pliny the Elder who spoke of animal species!
since the neoliberal model that underlies emergence, generates inequalities that ultimately weaken society\(^{17}\).

It is necessary for Africa to think of building alternatives, to imagine models which, while ensuring progress, are likely to stop the mechanisms that generate inequalities. We must therefore dare to innovate, dare to think, dare to deconstruct conceptual couplings, in order to escape the diktat of the proponents of the There Is No Alternative (TINA)\(^{18}\) ideology.

**What to do ?** The question has several aspects: what to do, why, with whom? But, before that, there is one fundamental question that must be answered: it is that of our identity, that of the identity of AROA. «**Who are we**» ? is an unavoidable question. In the face of the myriad of reports on Africa, we need to be clear about where AROA stands, and what sets it apart from the others. Several characteristics seem to have to be highlighted:

- AROA is produced by reasonable African citizens in search of alternatives to conceptual, methodological and analytical plans. These actors do not align themselves with a given ideology (Marxism, Kemitism, etc.) or normative conceptual «packages» («good governance», the fight against poverty, etc.), but with a common objective of enabling Africans to be heard, in relation to the co-construction of knowledge on Africa, that goes beyond the symptoms and affects the real determinants of its situation, as well as efficient drivers of its transformation.

- These actors are daring, daring enough to try to conquer the future, by giving themselves the political means to accelerate and amplify the dynamics of ongoing societal changes, and to turn the desirable into a reality.

Given these principles, we can provide answers to the three key questions mentioned above.

1. **What to do ?**

The overall objective of AROA is to reach and weigh on the consciences, positions and strategies of Africans, in general, and of citizens, academics, students, decision-makers, personalities, citizen movements, socio-professional organizations, private sector organizations, associations, local-elected representatives, media, opinion leaders, communities, local, national, regional and international institutions, etc. in particular. Its specific objectives are threefold: to understand, to mobilize and to act.

**To understand** : It is a question of studying current dynamics and anticipating changes; in other words, AROA will propose a strategic diagnosis, and elements of forecasts. A problem remains, however, that can be formulated as follows: from which theoretical corpus, which paradigm (s), will the diagnosis emanate? Regarding forecasts, AROA will favor an exploratory or normative approach, such as that of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In either case, deconstruction work will be absolutely necessary to be undertaken, with the clear awareness that the weapon of criticism is not a luxury, but an instrument for those who want to change the world; that theory is necessary because, if a right theory cannot lead to a revolution, there can be revolution without a revolutionary theory (Amilcar Cabral).

Whether for the diagnosis or for forecasts, which indicators will be chosen? How do we build them and how do we present them?

**To mobilize** : Through AROA, we must create a desirable future, arouse ambitions, encourage actors and the greatest possible number of actors, to stand up against the disposessions connected to the history of capitalism and imperialism.
The problem is to know around which vision this mobilization will take place. The question is relevant because, in the absence of a clear vision of notions such as sovereignty, autonomy, well-being, change, or even Africa, or citizens, epistemological misuses will go on for ever. And yet, two visions are at stake: a relational process (which favors social links) and an economic process, or process of accumulation (investment in capital). Between these two approaches, there should be no clash of principles; but, in fact, the imbalance between the two is such that, if we are not careful enough, the emphasis on capital will prevail over everything, in all fields, including those which, in principle, should be relational.

To act: The preferred choice is that of changing African economies and societies through public policies, as opposed to changes that would result from the “invisible hand” of the market. It should be pointed out that the action-related choices had not been unanimously made. The opposition was rather between those who advocated action through recommendations addressed to leaders to change public policies, and those who, dismissing the latter as actors of profound and significant changes, chose to create political pressure by promoting active citizenship, through support for grassroots organizations and social citizen movements. These two horizons are neither compartmentalized nor contradictory on the contrary. This explains the choice of wanting to contribute to changing the format of public policies, by focusing on the real dynamics driven by Africans, which have a potential for change towards autonomy and sovereignty; while, of course, these actors of change are never part of the official views relayed by conventional reports. By reinforcing the capacities of the actors to better decode the stakes of the trajectories of Africa, they will themselves know more, and better weigh on the definition of these public policies on different scales.

One of the characteristics of today’s societies is the fragmentation of public powers, to take into account the demands and powers of grassroots communities. Would it not be legitimate to turn a bottom-up approach that would start from asserting the aspirations of those at the base of the pyramid, into a model of participatory and federal democracy?

The question «what to do?» should also focus primarily on the demographic issue, in close
The proponents of the Alternative Report on Africa have already set the stage for a partnership with research institutions, think-tanks, non-governmental and civic organizations; private and public companies; similar initiatives, African personalities and the Diaspora, in order to build sustainable capacities to create products that reflect the sensibilities and life-experiences of Africans in different environments. Its definitions and interests may involve economics, technology, geography, history, psychology, and any relevant subject, as well as interactions between them.

But this demographic variable is not properly taken into account. The demographic question is important in relation to the potential that it offers, to employment and to migrations. On this point, AROA will need to address the question of whether employment policies should be designed to generate profits for businesses, or to meet needs, including those of disadvantaged groups.

The economic development approach based on the industrialization and deployment of modernized small farming seems a promising breakthrough. For modernized farming, the model to be invented cannot be that of capitalist agribusinesses, because, to be operational today, this capital-intensive model, creating only a few jobs, besides being ecocide19, should have 5 Americas for it to export liberated farmers who amount to four billion.

As watchdogs and activators of a new impetus for Africans, the actors gathered by AROA will introduce, in this trial issue, the guidelines of their philosophy and their vision of Africa in a fast-moving world. The Africa presented here is the one often depicted in anecdotal terms in conventional reports. The focus here is on an Africa rehabilitated without any concession.

2. A methodological, ideological and strategic challenge

The proponents of the Alternative Report on Africa20 have already set the stage for a partnership with research institutions, think-tanks, non-governmental and civic organizations; private and public companies; similar initiatives, African personalities and the Diaspora, in order to build sustainable capacities to create products that reflect the sensibilities and life-experiences of Africans in different environments. Its definitions and interests may involve economics, politics, social, environment, culture, science, technology, geography, history, psychology, and any relevant subject, as well as interactions between them.

But, at the very time when the relevance and added value of such an alternative report is established, there are major questions about its orientation. Where to look to see the changes at work in a multi-level Africa, and in a complex world? What would be specific African stakes? What are the relevant units of measurement, and indicators? Where to position Africa in relation to the rest of the world? What is the role of informal actors in the knowledge production process, alongside other stakeholders?

AROA will follow a framework of reference that puts African citizens at the center of the prospect of economic and social progress. It launches a slogan to break with the blind imitation about the path to development, and to rethink the global world from local and personal knowledge, rooted in the culture and vast heterogeneity and diversity of Africa. It must be a component of the efforts to rehabilitate its history, and decolonize its mind; ARO should be an African analytical voice aimed at Africa and by Africa.

The «alternative» is, first and foremost, what makes us see the hidden drivers of positive and negative developments in Africa. It is what shows how, despite everything, Africans claim to be responsible for their own destiny and future, and strive to create a new reality. In addition, AROA should reflect a different ideological and systemic vision.

More specifically, the “alternative” is about the following:

- coming up with a definition of progress for Africa and Africans, closer to their universe and visions of the world, their realities and their practices;
- reporting on societal, economic, cultural, religious, political, and environmental developments and changes that give another idea of Africa being built, and which actually eludes conventional indicators of development and well-being;
- reflecting a vision of Africans in the future, and change to their thought (s) on Africa and the world;
- enabling African citizens and actors to take part in the production of a report that reflects the real life and cultural realities of the populations, by innovating concerning its methods, by setting up a platform for knowledge and information production, by combining scientific, civic, community and popular sources.
3. Structuring major issues

The report is built on five major issues, according to a multi-disciplinary approach.

The first issue, entitled «Africa: from conceptual abstraction to diverse African realities», shows that Africa, is at the same time, a concept invented and cast in various representative models, and a potent reality in its geography, history, and demography, and in its cultural, social, economic and political specificities.

Yet, its image of real or supposed unity is perpetuated, without being able to inhibit an extreme diversity that has become one of its most visible markers. Under this component, the Report's authors explore the system of knowledge about Africa, its various constituents and the Africanity of Africans, and of those experiencing Africa from outside. They also call on Africa and its Diaspora about their past and future articulations, seeking to define the boundaries of Africa, not from its geography or its cultures, but rather from a claim to having the same origins. This component postulates that the relations of the peoples of Africa with those of the Diaspora must constitute a particular area of interest, which requires that they be analyzed separately from Africa's relations with the rest of the world.

The second theme, devoted to African thoughts, proposes a reflexive approach to the epistemological archeology of thought on Africa and of traditional African thought.

Through a diachronic and synthetic approach, it focuses on major cultural, historical, and existential issues that have been raised around the «Africa subject » by European and African thinkers. It closes with questions on the methods of drawing up a social/scientific model, able to emerge on African cultural soil, as an epistemological requirement and as a way leading to well-being and self-fulfillment, in connection with the issue of Pan-Africanism and regional integration.

The third theme focuses on the issue of power and its devolution in Africa. If democracy is an injunction from outside, which has been so misguided, what kind of governance does Africa need? What do Africans really think about it? This insightful questioning should not make us think that the state
of democracy represents everywhere, and particularly in Africa, a key to the study and interpretation of the way societies operate, and a determinant of their stability and cohesion. If democracy is accepted by the international hegemonic system as the only mode from which actors, organizations, institutions define rules and practices to access and keep power; it is far from adequately satisfying the intrinsic values and cosmogonies of Africans. It works as a free-ranging appendage. How to bridge the gap between the processes of running «modern» institutions and those of African societies? How to reinvent them, so that they may be more legitimate? How to strengthen their ownership by the majority of the populations they are supposed to represent and embody?

The fourth theme discusses prerequisites to achieve desirable futures in transformational sovereignty. According to the authors of this Report, only the project of people's sovereignty is the alternative to liberal globalization. Indeed, contemporary world capitalism is a complex set of States (independent nations, in principle), peoples and nations (whether «homogeneous» or not), and of social classes defined by the conflictual capital/labor distribution which constitutes the foundation of capitalism. Inter-state conflicts and class warfare are locked into a close relationship of interdependence, an effect of how the various dominant blocs make use of the possibilities they have on the international scene.

The resulting idea of global alliances of the dominated classes, capable of creating a «global alternative», is thus confronted with serious obstacles of which we propose an analysis here. These desirable futures in a transformative sovereignty must also respond to the demographic challenge, since, between 2015 and 2050, African populations will increase by one billion three hundred million inhabitants (50% of the global population growth of 2.4 billion).

Between 2050 and 2100, Africa will lead world population growth (128%). At present, its labor force (aged 15-64) is growing every year from 17.5 to 18 million. By 2030, the number of new comers to the labor market will be around 27 million. In general, the potential labor force is expected to double or even triple in 41 African countries, between 2010 and 2050, to reach 1.25 billion. In the face of these demographic trends, the report will explore the possibility of absorbing this growing work force into decent jobs. Far from accrediting “end-of-work” prophecies, we postulate a new distributive paradigm, which is a major challenge at the intersection of demographic and contemporary technological change for twenty-first century Africa. These mutations impact the daily lives of Africans as consumers of contents and means. But apart from some projects and initiatives that are held up as IT successes in Africa (M PESA in Kenya, Manobi in Senegal ...), we are still looking for the real productive dynamics that they have inspired. Therefore, the trap to avoid is to make a new mirage of them.

The main objective of the fifth theme is to propose paradigms, models, criteria, indicators and calculation methods adapted to African contexts. These methods and tools should allow to combine in an original and innovative way the quantitative and the qualitative dimension, and to lay the foundations for a renunciation of the principle of «global thinking, and local actions», if it means a colonization of knowledge justifying the thought and strategies adopted in the centers of power of developed countries, for the purpose of replicating them in developing countries. But, on the contrary, if «to think global, to act local» can be interpreted as meaning an action undertaken locally, from a sense of belonging and contributing to global dynamics, we would make it ours.

The fact of inventing new instruments of measure is not intended to be part of a technically-oriented approach; nor to turn away from the social, political and economic issues that shape the lives of Africans.

On the contrary, it is a matter of shifting our gaze from outside to inside, by clearing new paths in the measurement and characterization of the informal dynamics of the real economy. In addition to the rehabilitation of a socio-economic sector of ecological, social and solidarity-based entrepreneurial initiatives, the objective of AROA is to promote the debates on what is considered of value, the aims of society, the economic orientations and political commitments that it implies.

Mostly from the bottom of the pyramid, actors of the informal economy know how to find suitable offers. Based on personal histories, they pursue non-linear trajectories, hold ambitions that deserve to be studied, supported and amplified. This requires knowledge of their working conditions, and of their institutional, logistical, legal, societal and technical constraints.
AROA’S OBJECTIVES AND APPROACHES

AROA will reach and weigh on the consciences, positions and strategies of Africans, in general, and of citizens, academics, students, decision-makers, personalities, citizen movements, socio-professional organizations, private sector organizations, associations of local-elected representatives, media, opinion leaders, communities, local, national, regional and international institutions, etc., in particular.

- Overall Objective: Contribute to consolidating changes at work in African societies/institutions, aimed at autonomy and sovereignty, by making visible the dynamics and mutations at work on the continent; in particular those led by Africans, and sustained with their own principles of life, an innovative spirit and the will to conquer their autonomy.

To generate and share knowledge about the alternatives and innovations that are being built in Africa

AROA should make it possible to show the formative character and the scope of the real dynamics of the continent, and the innovative spirit of African societies, not only in the economic field, as through most of the reports, but in a holistic vision including cultural and social matters, the relations to nature and the imagination; methods of decision-making and regulation on scales that are often invisible, for traditional African reporting processes. The aim will be to analyze, document and share the achievements, and barriers to, African societies and institutions sovereignty and autonomy; as well as factors that favor both the structural and cyclical constraints affecting the scaling up of innovations, projects, companies, practices, etc., which present an interest for man and nature in Africa. This will help influence policies and strategies that incite to greater efficiency and autonomy for African societies in their development.

- Motivate and mobilize, within a collective dynamic process, those who want to change Africa through a sovereignty project

The success of the AROA initiative will depend entirely on the commitment and mobilization of African talents, and on the technical, scientific, intellectual, financial resources of Africans, here and from the Diaspora. Most of the arrangements put in place are aimed at ensuring and facilitating the contributions of Africans to the initiative, whose goal is, above all, the recovery of elements of sovereignty in the production of knowledge about Africa.

AROA’s production process is itself a great innovation since it seeks to bring together scientific, academic, and social and civic contributions, relying on co-production and collaborative work tools. (Website: www.AROA-Africa.org, Wiki AROA, Chaine YouTube AROA, Facebook AROA). Exchange platforms will be open and interactive. This is vital for engaging stakeholders and the ownership of process and results.

Directing individual and collective actions and public policies on various scales

AROA must become an indispensable instrument for influencing Africans’ opinions on their countries and societies, as well as on the perception of Africa. Thus, debates and spaces for defining strategies or policies will be sustained and enriched by endogenous knowledge that makes sense for Africans. Such knowledge will be produced on a credible basis, and will highlight innovations by Africans, and strengthen their empowerment.

AROA is also a response to the shortcomings of the forecasts capacities of African institutions and actors that drive the dynamics of the continent (civil society organizations, local authorities, governments, regional economic communities, African Union). It will inform African forecasts on the future, in the context of a return to long-term planning, at national and continental levels. AROA will be an instrument for measuring the progress of long-term plans, and deficiencies in relation to sovereignty and forecasts.

One of the roles of knowledge production processes, including reporting, is to validate or challenge policy choices, and report on their effectiveness in the short, medium and long term. AROA will be an instrument to appreciate the relevance of public policies, and their real impact on transforming societies, and in particular on their sovereign and autonomous nature.
Africa : from conceptual abstraction to Africans diverse realities

I- / A demanding return to an African centrality of the debate on Africa

Africa is easily located on a map of the world as a geographical entity. However, the objective and subjective meanings of Africa are different, even for Africans and peoples of African descent.21

What is Africa? What is an African? How does he see the continent and himself as belonging to it? More than the diversified origin of the name «Africa» (Ifriqiya, Afriki, etc.), and the old denominations designating the countries of black people, it is the concept of «Africa» that AROA addresses, in its meaning, evolutions and ideological and epistemological extensions. As a result of a construction and a questioning from a broad intellectual community, the concept pervades a much diversified literature. Africa is at the same time a concept invented and molded in various forms of representation, while being a potent reality in its geography, history, demography and cultural, social, economic and political specificities.

Africa has, in turn, been a pre-colonial and colonial invention, whose image of real or imagined unity is being perpetuated, while revealing an extreme diversity that has become one of its most striking features. The Africa of the past; the Africa of States born of colonization and structured around frozen borders; the Africa of regional economic communities; the Africa of cross-border and internal regions; the Africa of villages; the Africa of cities; cultural Africa, with traits so common and so diverse, must be confronted with the real Africa and the daily realities of the billion individuals coming from families, communities of multiple affiliations; from regions and countries that, perhaps, have little or no concern for Africa in terms of development, struggle, or plans for the future. Here, it implies a resort to the knowledge system on Africa, its various components and the Africanity of Africans from within and from the Diaspora, those experiencing Africa from outside.

It implies through AROA also a consideration of these dimensions in previous reports as well as in the proposals and actions of African institutions. Which scientific approaches or experiential practices, make it possible to adequately grasp African realities, as well as the concerns of the populations? How to measure the tension between «mé» and «us», concerning Africans? All these questions must be the subject of an open and systematic approach, structuring the production of Alternative Reports that correspond to the representations of Africans on Africa. The invention of Africa as a scientific subject or as a representation of sense and belonging has been the subject of innumerable works.

Valentin-Yves Mudimbé23, a philosopher, writer, poet and Congolese literary critic, presents the stakes of the epistemological requirement through the debate on Africa and Africans, for the salvation of the continent. Since the 1970s, he has sought to denounce the conceptual and paradigmatic extroversion of African social sciences, emphasizing the debate over the crisis of African humanity, and the role of social sciences (discourse) in Africa. He understood very early that the insertion of Africanism into Western debate had «exogenized» the knowledge produced on Africa, enclosing it within presentations and analytical frameworks far removed from the realities that they claimed to address.

Most of the approaches on Africa and Africans were focused on processes of rehabilitation and revalorization of the continent, long regarded as deprived of history. Historically, the dominant sensitivities of intellectual creativity have been marked by debates about the identity of the black man, about self-determination, and the promotion of African humanities.

According to Valentin-Yves Mudimbé, the ethnological debate is only a pretext used to inquire: how could Africans undertake at home a theoretical approach allowing them to sustain political practice (p.10). In this connection, Mahmood Mamdani denounces the reasoning by analogy among Africanists in «Citizen and subject».24

21  Such, however, is the extent of the oppression and deprivation of some deeply isolated communities of African descent in Asia and Latin America, that the assumption of complete ignorance of the existence cannot be ruled out - and of their connections to the continent. Discovering and integrating these people of African descent deserve to be considered as a duty of AROA towards Africa and the «lost tribes of Africa».


In his work «The smell of the father» 25, which seems to draw on the findings made in the previous book, regarding the inadequacy of ethnology in explaining African realities, but also in its predatory nature, Mudimbe proposes a right of excommunication to African researchers. He expresses it into these terms:

«Any African researcher must consider the following trite remarks: the West has created the « uncivilized man » in order to civilize him; «underdevelopment» in order to develop him; primitive people to engage in ethnology. These trite remarks cover overwhelming patterns that must be accepted or rejected. Accepting them implies that the development model will mean adjustment to the economic, social and political evolution of the West, and that the role of social sciences will be that of an auxiliary to this program and to the political design of the ruling classes. To reject it is to choose «adventure» against «science»; uncertainty, against intellectual security; but it also means opting for a promise, that of being able to produce «one science from within», that of integrating into the true complexity of African social formations, and accepting them no longer as copies of Western history, but on the basis of their cultural and historical specificity; it means seeing Africa as anything but an appendage to the West; finally, and above all, the fact is that social sciences should not only be collectors of information called «objective», but also reveal social mobility, and be places for permanent awareness and expression» (p. 57).

In a neoliberal globalization organized into geopolitical entities, the African continent must find its bearings, which social sciences should outline. This new paradigm implies a reorganization of the Western-inspired positivist epistemological order, to establish an Africanist epistemic system for a theoretical study of the question of the future of our continent, of its economic and social development and, above all, of its relationship with the rest of a world marked by a fantastical vision of the market. In this respect, Africanist social sciences should not stay away from the political and economic struggle of the populations of Africa. More than ever, in the context of globalization, they should act as whistleblowers and advisors, to inform the strategies of African actors, in a globalization where transnational networks have seized upon economic powers.

Today, it is urgent for African researchers to revisit, in a critical and «rupturalist» way, traditional categories, in order to decipher, prepare and translate on-going changes, by tackling the challenges and stakes facing the continent. It is the responsibility of these researchers to re-appraise the Africanist debate, to suggest a shifting of the debate on Africa towards an understanding of the mutations underway on the African continent.

Africa is now fully engaged in a complex consideration of new social issues, whose elucidation requires an internalized awareness of modernity, different from an imported, partial and disjointed, modernization.

In an approach similar to that of Albert Memmi in the «Portrait of the colonized»27, Tony Obeng wonders how to get rid of the words by which a status of «dependent», «loser» was given to Africans; while we tend to use those very words, even as we seek to «decolonize ourselves».

Africa is not limited to Africans living in Africa; it takes into account Diasporas, other realities and ways of thinking that can represent breaks and transgressions in relation to the idea one might have of the continent as reserved essentially for black peoples.

Keith Richburg, former head of the Washington Post office in Africa, even considers that a black man of the Diaspora can be engaged in a confrontation with Africa or even distinguish himself as a hater of Africa28.

Barack Obama was a follower of it, he also represents the quintessence of African-American «success» and of the «American dream», par excellence, according to the standards of many peoples, and no doubt according to his own judgment, was, through the proclamation of his belief in «American exceptionalism through each fiber of (his) being».

But there are also real haters of Africa among the blacks of the Diaspora; when, for example, throughout Keith Richburg’s book, who distances himself from Africa - and even with contempt for the land of his ancestors - one feels in him some gratitude for slave traders who removed his ancestors from the continent, to finally give him access to the «American dream».

Another example is given from the unbelievable comment reported by Franklin Johnston, advisor to the Jamaican Minister of Education, in the Jamaica Observer newspaper of October 2, 2015 :

Franklin Johnston’s next remark that the student’s anger was «unexpected, untimely, but logical» is nonetheless revealing. We must recognize the historical fact that slavery had victims and opponents, as well as accomplices on the «black continent», and a certain hostility about Africa is understandable among African Diasporas who are still suffering from the consequences of the slave trade, and «post-abolition» slavery. A massive psychological trauma has been caused by it.

Fortunately, the African world has not lacked Africans from the Diaspora, who are willing and able to bridge the gap between Africa and the Diaspora, and to see their own liberation from the injustices and indignities they have suffered abroad, as inseparable from the liberation of their ancestral lands from exploitation, impoverishment and other injustices and indignities. The following warning that Marcus Garvey addressed in 1922 to British Prime Minister Lloyd George, in response to the massacre by British colonial agents of Kenyan workers in their homeland, clearly illustrates this:

To David Lloyd George, British Prime Minister, Downing St., London

“Through the Association for the Promotion of Negroes, four hundred million blacks are protesting against brutal treatment by your own government of natives in Kenya, East Africa.

26 Amadou Sarr Diop, 2015, Radicalsity of the Africanist social sciences and reinvention of the future of Africa in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century: the stakes of a debate, Dakar, CODESRIA.
27 Albert Memmi, 1985, Portrait of the colonized, preceded by Portrait of the colonizer, first issue, Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, Current Folio Collection, n° 97, Paris, Gallimard.

To David Lloyd George, British Prime Minister, Downing St., London

“Through the Association for the Promotion of Negroes, four hundred million blacks are protesting against brutal treatment by your own government of natives in Kenya, East Africa.

... Un rapport pour l’Afrique et par l’Afrique

Team RASA
You have gunned down defenseless people in their own country, who were exercising their rights as men.

Such a policy will exacerbate the many historic injustices that will arise against one race who will, one day, be able to defend itself, not with sticks, and stones, but with modern instruments of science.«

Among the remarkable examples of the Diaspora’s participation in Africa’s liberation movement are the life and achievements of Peter Milliard, the Guyanese physician who co-chaired the Fifth Pan-African Congress with William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, George Padmore, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Kwame Ture Carmichael and Walter Rodney. Equally notable in this respect is the role of Jamaica as the first territory to declare a trade embargo against apartheid in South Africa, and, this, even before having the status of formal independence.

For obvious reasons, the knowledge of Africa, and feelings about the continent and its peoples, among the silent majority of the Diaspora, among Africans in general - and peoples of African descent in South America, in some Arab lands, in Asia and in the Indian sub-continent and its islands in particular – are nothing to talk about.

How much of the majority of Africans in Africa know and care about «their» continent and its peoples is yet another mystery. But it is not an unreasonable assumption that many of the illiterates of the continent, to adapt the title of the famous book of Frantz Fanon, have no knowledge of Africa beyond their clans, villages, communities and state - and have no particular feelings about the continent and the peoples they barely know.

31 Paul Robeson, a popular singer whose combination of his anti-imperialist and civil rights activism led to the seizure of his US passport and the restraining by order of President Truman of his continental movements in the United States. The official reason given for the restriction of his movements was that “when he went abroad, he protested against colonialism and pleaded for the independence of Africa, which is contrary to the best interests of the United States” — (Vincent Dowd, ‘Singer Paul Robeson’s granddaughter recalls fight against racism’, BBC News, 7 May 2014, www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-27291682).

33 This observation is without prejudice to the many documented cases of mass Afrophobia sponsored by the Government and the elite. On this point, see, for example, Michael Neocosmos, 2010, From ‘Foreign Natives’ to ‘Native Foreigners: Explaining Xenophobia in Post-Apartheid South Africa Citizenship and Nationalism, Identity and Politics, CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal.
This loss of interest by the elite in the living conditions, struggles and achievements of the peoples of Africa, beside Ayi Kwei Armah’s «colonial slave pens», is palpable. Deep ignorance, pressures for survival and adaptation have rooted «micro nationalism» in Africa, at the expense of pan-Africanism in both its continental and global meanings. African descendents of the Diaspora do not know where to turn, since the end of the era of Kwame Nkrumah, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ahmed Ben Bella, Mohammed V, Patrice Lumumba, Ahmed Sekou Toure, Modibo Keita, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda and Boubacar Diallo Telli, first Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity ... and the end of Thomas Sankara’s ephemeral attempt to revive the African collective struggle for emancipation. The numerous cases of mass afro-phobia and official expulsions of «foreigners» and «illegal immigrants» from Africa - accused of «stealing» local jobs, local businesses and other sources of income and local women, are even gloomier aspects of pan-Africanism.

The elites and «globalized» or compradore governments of Africa bear the greatest responsibility for the current difficulties of Pan-Africanism as a community project or fighting force. Because of their networks of diplomatic representations in Latin America, Asia and the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East, where the majority of people of African descent continue to be treated like slaves or worse - and literature and documentary and anecdotal evidence - the African Union, its member states and the «new generation of African leaders», are equally open to blatant and deliberate indifference to the oppressed and dehumanized African Diaspora in the old world and Latin American sites of «black» oppression.

II/- Africa and its Diaspora: which alternative articulations?

The African Diaspora is spread over three main geographical areas: Europe, the United States and the Gulf countries. It can be useful to Africa in at least three main areas:

- improvement of technical and academic skills;
- the provision of financial resources for development. The remittances of this Diaspora to Africa are currently estimated at more than 10% of the GDP of some African countries;
- a better representation of Africa in the world, based on the relations that this Diaspora has been able to build in the various countries of refuge.

The formation of an African Diaspora resulting from slavery around the world, colonization or colonial slavery within the continent; and the unacceptable exploitation of African natural resources, from the colonial era to these days, are sufficient testimonials to the exposure of the continent and its peoples to the rest of the world, and to the deterioration of the terms of trade to the detriment of Africa and Africans. On a more positive note, the global reach of Africa across its Diaspora means that, as peoples, Africans have at least as many networking opportunities as Europeans, who have used their global network to shape and reshape Africa and a large part of the world to meet their own political, economic, and cultural needs. By combining the indisputable resources of the mother continent, Africans and the Diaspora should be able to show and demonstrate that - with all the persuasive and, if necessary, coercive means at its disposal - Africa is an indispensable continent, with the right and power to determine and shape its commitment with the rest of the world, as a partner, and not as a dependent and non-respectable continent.

To sustain those changes regarding Africans and peoples of African descent in the world, AROA could also consider analyzing cases where individuals, continental Africans and the Diaspora; communities, states, nations, sub-regions, regions, etc., respond to racial abuse, or the threat of such abuse, by Africans and people of African descent.

The opportunities created, seized or neglected to help Africans and people of African descent who are victims of racial discrimination, oppression and injustice, must also be emphasized. It goes without saying that every African and member of the Global African Family should be considered a person likely to be interested in AROA, as well as its trials, tribulations and achievements; AROA should highlight the activities, achievements and challenges of people of African descent living in Asia, the Indian sub-continent, North Africa and the Middle East and other «lost, or hitherto neglected, tribes of Africa».

The Report on events worthy of interest should serve the following four-fold objective:

80% of the total of these transfers. In the lead, Nigeria and its 180 million inhabitants received 19 billion USD in 2016, followed by Egypt with 16.6 billion and Morocco with 7 billion. Ghana and Algeria can also claim 2 billion USD received by each.
a) develop community relations between the two branches of the Global African Family;
b) maintain Africa’s responsibilities towards its Diaspora, and vice versa;
c) compensate for the past neglect of peoples of African descent in Asia, the Indian sub-continent, North Africa, the Middle East, and in other places that have so far escaped pan-Africanist attention;
d) warn global and local oppressors of African peoples, that they can no longer escape African control.
African thought(s), from yesterday to today

The world has made Africa, but above all, it is Africa that has made the world, not only in terms of population, but also of thought. The history of scholarship in Africa is centuries old, even millennia old, as evidenced by the tens of thousands of documents in the Library of Alexandria, Qarawiyine University in Fez and Al-Azhar in Cairo, and the manuscripts of Timbuktu. Many African intellectuals have reflected on the problems of the world, from Africa.

Among these, CODESRIA, ENDA, AFARD, the Third World Forum and others have contributed significantly to decompartmentalizing traditional and hegemonic matrices, and to the decolonization of social sciences and humanities for more than 40 years. From history to philosophy, through the environment, the themes covered include: regional integration, the conception of development (Samir Amin, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Jacques Bugnicourt, Philippe Engelhard, Emmanuel Ndione, etc.), traditions, universality and internationalism; the criticism of colonial scholarship and the questioning of its claim to monopoly (Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Amady Aly Dieng, Cheikh Anta Diop, Achille Mafeje, Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, Theophile Obenga, etc.). Women, also, have allowed real advances on issues such as gender, with Fatou Sow, Amina Mama, Ayesha Imam who edited Sex, Gender and Society. To engender the African social sciences (2004), Sex, Gender and Society. To engender the African social sciences, Paris, CODESRIA-Karthala Publishing House, 461 pages, etc.). Women, also, have allowed real advances on issues such as gender, with Fatou Sow, Amina Mama, Ayesha Imam who edited Sex, Gender and Society. To engender the African social sciences, Paris, CODESRIA-Karthala Publishing House, 461 pages, etc.).

As we know, Africa has been symbolically, politically, economically, culturally and environmentally, marked by the slave trade and colonization, to which we can now add neo-colonization, structural adjustment and all other forms of hegemonic principles, that have an impact on the assertion of its identity and the challenge of its Renaissance.

All this was accompanied by a so-called «civilizing» ideology, whose aim was to make Africans feel and be seen as inferior and to reject them to the periphery of history, in order to dominate and exploit them.

Revisionist scientific literature has had profound repercussions on the minds of Africans, making a chaotic, and even psychopathological, presentation of Africa, so that certain segments of its populations have been in the grip of an existential crisis which still downgrades them to the rank of archaic peoples, fighting against poverty and survival.

As part of a reflexive approach, an attempt is made here to engage in an epistemological research on thought on Africa and classical African thought. A diachronic and synthetic approach is adopted to try to focus, first, on the major civilization and existential issues that have been raised around the «Africa-subject » concept, by thinkers in Europe and Africa; the former in order to legitimize colonization, and the latter in an attempt to rehabilitate an alienated historical conscience.

I-/ From falsification to rehabilitation of the «Africa-subject »

1. Clichés about the civilizing mission in Africa

The general framework of representations concerning the African continent as a subject of study was forged in the West, and was built gradually from very different historical material that the missionaries produced after their stay in Africa (accounts of exploitation, geographical reports, political speeches, literary texts, engravings, illustrations, photographs, etc.) in a specific geo-historical context, that of a project to conquer a place.

Beyond the diversity of the tools chosen, the varieties of their contexts of relevance and the differentiation of the literary, political or informational objectives pursued by their authors, it is the homogeneity of their statements that strikes.

These images establish a representation of Africa that is both politically and morally the same, and resting only on ethnic differentiation, most of which is naturalized and treated as folklore.

Thus, the production of knowledge about Africa is basically linked to the formation of power in the colonial era.

35 Ayesha Imam, Amina Mama and Fatou Sow (Editor) (2004), Sex, Gender and Society. To engender the African social sciences Paris, CODESRIA-Karthala Publishing House, 461 pages
36 The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
The colonial situation and opinions on Africa are combined to produce a joint ideological corpus, aimed at an effective legitimization of that “civilizing mission”.

Built around descriptions by travelers and inspired by the Darwinian evolutionary theory, anthropological thinking corroborates the fundamental concept of a hierarchy of human cultures and civilizations. Many Western\(^\text{39}\) anthropological theories included a classification system of human societies, instead of a study of their social and political systems. They denied any specifically African value, and thought that the Africans could not bring anything to Europe, at least on a moral and spiritual level. Europeans were unanimous on the primitive nature of Blacks, but appraised the latter differently, according to their respective school of thought. Philanthropists and missionaries regarded Blacks with some compassion and endeavored to develop assimilative ideas, according to which Blacks could only be saved if they adopted Western civilization.

In 1879, on the occasion of a banquet commemorating the abolition of slavery, Victor Hugo said that “the time has come to point out to Europe that she has been on the side of Africa. The moment has come to tell Spain and France that they are still there, that their mission has changed without transforming itself; that they are still in the same position of responsibility and sovereignty concerning the Mediterranean. That block of sand and ashes; that inert and passive heap which, for six thousand years, has been an obstacle to universal progress. God has offered Africa to Europe. Take it”.

We can also add those words of Jules Ferry, then republican deputy of the Left, said in the Chamber of Deputies, on July 28, 1885, in criticizing the humanism of Europe in decline, in knowing that “what is missing more and more to our big industry are outlets. There is nothing more serious; however, this program is closely linked to colonial politics. We must look for outlets. A second point that I must address is the humanitarian and civilizing side of the issue. Superior races have a duty to civilize inferior races. This duty has often been overlooked in the history of past centuries. But, nowadays, I maintain that European nations should do that overriding job, with greatness and honesty. »

This line of thinking clearly shows that the imaginary mission of Europe concerning Africa, was strongly defended by those who were the guardians of European civilization, and that colonization was forcibly legitimized in view of its economic and political significance.

Even if Africa is not the only colonial entity that is the subject of such clichés, it nonetheless occupies a special place linked to the Western perception of the Negro "race". For explorers and scientists of the nineteenth century; mainly under the influence of the evolutionary theory, black races were among the most backward in terms of human evolution. Thus, in the article "Colony" of the great universal dictionary of the nineteenth century, published between 1863 and 1865, Pierre Larousse says: «It is in vain that some philanthropists have tried to prove that the Negro species is as intelligent as the white species. Some rare examples are not sufficient to prove the existence of intellectual faculties in them. An indisputable fact, which dominates all the others, is that their brains are narrower, lighter, and less voluminous than those of the white species; this fact proves the superiority of the white species over the black species».

Similarly, the continent is described as a wild place, the “darkest Africa”, according to Henry Morton Stanley, in his essay on explorers, from an amalgam between what is not known to the West and what does not exist. Africa was perceived as not yet belonging to the ecumene; therefore, it was a virgin space to conquer and to exploit. This vision confirms the one about its inhabitants, and justifies colonial intervention to develop it, given its status as a “tabula rasa”. Thus, Charles Lavégerie, a French Archbishop of Algiers in 1867, summarizes this idea in the following way: «In France, everything seems finished; while everything is beginning, in vast Africa»!

Giving a negative image of Africa was a strategy to promote colonial projects. Thus, Émile-Félix Gauthier (1864-1940), engaged in a career of researcher in field geography in Madagascar, and then a teacher in Algiers, takes over the expansionist and primitivist idea that founded the colonial project: «One thing is certain, the black population throughout Africa is quite disproportionate to the resources and opportunities, and even to people per square kilometer. On a planet where other major continents are already rapidly overpopulating, Africa is the empty continent. It is a blind spot where the civilizing influences of the North have not penetrated. We find there the picture of a primitive Africa».
The description of these geographical areas through a naturalistic and even primitive view of Africa, was taken over during the pivotal period of the establishment of classical Africa-based geography, by Jacques Richard-Molard (1913-1951)\textsuperscript{40}

who writes: «One mostly finds there a heterogeneous collection of fugitive barbarians, or former civilized people, from beaten and stifled savannahs. They preserve fragments of various extra-forest cultures wrapped up in defensive reactions and resignations, in the presence of a tyrannical environment, whose only advantage is the supply of negative security. This advantage has a cost. The forest absorbs peoples and does not give back any. Farmers are thus turned into field foragers, deprived of protein, stuffed with bananas, rhizomes and tubers, which are despicable foodstuffs ».

Colonization, which has always been made up with the clothes of a benefactor, built other forms of social institutions, with tools such as school, army training and urban management. There are realizations based on a vision that does not reflect the deep aspirations of the peoples of Africa, who have a different way of feeling what is real. In the shadow of these colonial schools grew a new African awareness, symbolized by currents of thought like the Negritude movement or Egyptology, which, suffused with the myths and legends of Greco-Roman civilization, also tried to engage in a great existential fight, by searching deep into Africa and by summoning its ancestors and gods.

2. Negritude or the cult of intuitive reason

The primary objective of the intellectual ferment among young African students was to reintegrate Africa into a process of social and intellectual progress, after the various deprivations she suffered. The birth of the intellectual movement of Negritude\textsuperscript{41} dates back to the 1930s, when African, Malagasy and West-Indian youths met in France to share their experiences and thoughts related to their daily situation - that of Blacks living in Paris during the colonial period.

The term «Negritude» is said to be due to Aime Cesaire, who had used it in his poetic collection, «Cahier d’un retour au pays natal!», proclaiming: «My negritude is not a stone, its deafness rushing against the clamor of the day; my negritude is not a dead water skin on the dead eye of the earth; my negritude is neither a tower, nor a cathedral».

However, apart from all the poetic potency of this first characteristic, it is obvious that, from its beginnings,

Negritude had a very concrete meaning. «Negritude is therefore the set of civilizational values of the Black world, as they are expressed in the lives and works of Blacks» according to the Senegalese poet, Leopold Sedar Senghor.

For the proponents of this movement, the first objective was to assert the cultural identity and dignity of Blacks, by referring to history to recall and magnify the pre-colonial Africa of kingdoms and empires; by referring to traditional culture, to the specific and peculiar characteristics of the black soul’s vision. The Black world should be allowed to defend its values, to rehabilitate them by refusing the assimilation policy imposed by colonizers. Living under the colonial yoke, Blacks strove to regain their place in the history and culture of the world. Negritude would thus appear as a Black process of cultural, historical, racial, awakening.

In his determination to disseminate the concept of negritude, by giving it meaning and direction in the construction of African thought, Léopold Sédar Senghor said: «The Negro is the man of nature. Traditionally, he lives off the earth and with the earth; in and through the universe. He is sensual; a being with open senses, without any intermediary between the subject and the object, he is a subject and an object at the same time. He is, first of all sounds, smells, rhythms, shapes and colors; for him, touch comes before sight, like the European white man. He feels more than he sees: he feels himself. It is in himself, in his flesh, that he receives and feels the radiations emitted by all existing objects. This means that the Negro is not devoid of reason, as I was told. But his reason is not discursive; it is synthetic. It is not antagonistic; it is sympathetic. It is another way of knowing. The Negro’s reason does not impoverish things, it does not mold them into rigid schemas, by eliminating juices and saps; it flows in the arteries of things, it feels out all their contours, to lodge itself in the living heart of reality. In Whites, reason is analytic by use; Black reason is intuitive by participation\textsuperscript{42}».

\textsuperscript{40} Chief of the Geographical Section at the French Institute of Black Africa, member of the National School of France Overseas, author of the Regional Monographs on African Rural Societies and Comparative General Scope

\textsuperscript{41} Georges Ngal, 1975, Aimé Césaire, a man looking for a homeland, Paris, Présence africaine.

Amadou Hampâté Bâ⁴³ recognized the specific nature of the perception of the world among Africans, and thus joined the ideas expressed by Léopold Sédar Senghor and others. According to him, «African knowledge is vast, varied, and concerns all aspects of life. In Africa, to the visible and apparent aspect of things always corresponds an invisible and hidden aspect, which is like its source or principle».

So was sung the black soul: thanks to their exceptional emotivity, Blacks were said to be able to remind the West of the forgotten values of the links with nature, of the place of man in the living world.

Their contribution to culture also consisted in restoring each individual to the continuity of his family and ethnic group.

Indeed, according to Aimé Césaire⁴⁴, «the work of man has just begun, and it is up to man to defeat every ban imposed upon his ardor, and no race has a monopoly on beauty, intelligence, or creative force».

While cultural and civilizational aspects dominated in all expressions of movement, Negritude was marked from the beginning by its ideological aspect. By claiming the value of African and Caribbean cultures, black intellectuals were naturally up against colonialism, undermining the original principle of colonization, that of the inferiority of colonized peoples, who required the contribution of Western culture to make any progress. The concept had therefore political connotations, although they were not always visible in the same way, or expressed with the same intensity.

The favorite themes were the stigmatization of the period of the slave trade, and colonial policy and its excesses. Authors denounced stereotypes about Africa and Blacks, called for rebellion, and tried to secure a transition between the colonial period and the time of independences.

Thus, according to Léopold Sédar Senghor⁴⁵, «Negritude was also a weapon for decolonization».

After the Second World War, Negritude took on new forms; it took to prose, and «the 1950's» saw the appearance of many original novels with strong expression. Novels contained ethnographic elements⁴⁶ which glorified pre-colonial Africa and restore memory by recalling the prestigious figures of African history, as can be seen in the writings of Djibril Tamsir Niane or Birago Diop.

⁴⁴ Aimé Césaire, 1956, «Culture and colonization, cultural magazine of the black world» n° 8-9-10, p. 190-255
⁴⁵ Léopold Sédar. Senghor, French Studies, vol. 3, n° 1, 1967, p. 3-20
Many autobiographical works, including those of Mongo Béti or Ousmane Sembène, were based on experiences on colonial societies and became, through the described lives of heroes, true learning novels. Aware of the changes taking place in the world and in mentalities, Negro-African writers also turned to the often difficult and conflicting relations between tradition and modernity.

Negritude has had considerable influence by appearing as a fair and recognized platform for black intellectuals. It thus played the role of a cultural locomotive for a good part of the African continent.

Some French intellectuals and writers enthusiastically welcomed new poetic expressions, interpreting them each in their own way: André Breton 47 emphasized the literary quality, the beauty of Cesaire’s works in these words «The words of Aime Cesaire are as beautiful as nascent oxygen»; Jean-Paul Sartre focused mainly on the human and social aspect, and emphasized the right of black poets to express the demands of their peoples and countries of origin. For him «The Negro ... is a victim of the capitalist structure of our society».

The influence of Negritude and other related phenomena extended beyond the circles of French-speaking black writers and events in English-speaking Africa. Witness the creation, in Nigeria, of the magazine Black Orpheus (referring to the famous essay by Jean-Paul Sartre), or the advent of English-speaking black poets and novelists such as Chinua Achebe, Cyprien Ekwensi or Amos Tutuola.

The numerous forms of expression of black culture, inextricably linked to Negritude, were confirmed during the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists, held in Paris in 1956.

The main initiative went to Alioune Diop, founder of Présence Africaine. Several members of the Negritude movement took part in the event, such as Aimé Césaire, as well as other personalities, including Amadou Hampâté Bâ, James Baldwin and Joséphine Baker.

This movement was maintained in the sixties. Présence Africaine, together with the African Cultural Society, was at the origin of the organization, in 1966 in Dakar, of the World Festival of Negro Arts, a memorable event that brought together many personalities, such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, André Malraux, Duke Ellington and many others from all over the world.

But the emphasis on the past was considered out of place in modern life, because it was likely to distract Africans and West Indians from the present. Wole Soyinka48, of Nigeria, the first black winner of the Nobel Prize in literature, declared: «A tiger doesn’t proclaim its «tigerness»; it jumps on its prey and eats it», meaning that it would have been more useful for the Black movement to go in the direction of concrete actions by abandoning sterile declarations.

According to many black intellectuals, the celebration of the Black soul presented a simplistic image of their ethnic groups. Black people were made to look like children, their main characteristic being reduced to dance, music and song.

Tchicaya U Tam’si, a Congolese author, expressed his doubts about the values of a militant or purely eulogistic literature of the past, and thus distanced himself from Negritude, to turn towards less ideological and more inward-looking issues and dilemmas.

While recognizing the important role Negritude played in the process of awakening black people, Frantz Fanon49 notes: «In coming up against whites’ contempt of Blacks, Negritude has proved, in some areas, the only one able to lift bans and curses».


49 Frantz Fanon, 1961, The Wretched of the Earth, foreword by Jean-Paul Sartre, Paris, Maspero.
Frantz Fanon is deeply convinced that the time of Negritude is over, and that it is now essential to go further, by adopting new attitudes.

As far as he is concerned, a real improvement of the black man’s self-esteem means that he should excel himself, undertake a struggle for political, psychological and cultural independence.

The unifying time of Negritude must be behind us, because for him, Negritude ultimately results only in «exhibitionist manifestations».

Even if the Negritude movement was one of the first grounding tests for the deconstruction of clichés, it will be seen in what follows that it is with the major book «Black Nations and Culture» of the Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop published in 1954, that African thinking attempted to forge the scientific instruments of its rehabilitation within universal civilization, through a historiography on ancient Egyptian civilization, which the author described as “black”.

3. Cheikh Anta Diop: for an Africa between scientific historicity and a continental vision

One of the ideas forcefully and powerfully emerging in reading the works of the Senegalese scientist is that there can be no African future without resorting to history. In this sense, Diop says that «It is essential that Africans turn to their own history and civilization, and study it to know themselves better».

While falling within the perspective of the decolonization of African history, the scientific positions of Cheikh Anta Diop50 raise questions about the philosophy and epistemology of history51.

Cheikh Anta Diop’s project to rewrite African history starts from the observation of an extroversion, even of a fallibility in narrating African history. His approach is rooted in the desire to completely turn his back on fallacies, and to reassess the historicity, and even the primacy, of African societies; but, also, to show that there is a spatio-temporal continuity regarding African societies, despite the territorial fragmentation and the diversity of tribes and peoples.

Indeed, the function of historiography is to provide a narrative and interpretative explanation of historical phenomena, which implies the need for a logic that gives historians material and immaterial resources to examine the content, the realities of causality between facts.

In addition to this objective of theoretical dismantling that was to pervade all his works, Cheikh Anta Diop aimed, not only to show that a non-event-based history of Africa is possible, but also to make of the idea that the Egyptians were blacks, a «fact of historical, African and universal consciousness, or even a workable scientific concept».

In the name of historical principles, he argues that all the theories drawn up to give an account of African’s past were definitely to serve colonialism, and in particular to lead black people to believe that they had never been behind anything valid.

As far as Cheikh Anta Diop is concerned, the challenge is first to disprove, publicly and scientifically, a certain conception of Africa and Egypt, that locates the latter outside Africa; and the author who went farthest in this direction of historical falsification is none other than Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel52.

Expressing his indignation concerning this «historical lie»53, Cheikh Anta Diop says: «The truth of these fragmented and simplistic theories is used for the sake of colonialism and their purpose is in the name of a pseudo-science, to make black people believe that they have never been responsible for anything good, not even for what exists at home».

Cheikh Anta Diop’s position is echoed favorably by Martinique’s psychiatrist, Martin Frantz, Fanon who, through psychological or even psychopathological analyses, reached conclusions that the denial of history can be a factor of cultural alienation, in addition to a misrepresentation in the cult of building the personality of colonized individuals, or resulting from colonization.

So, for Cheikh Anta Diop, the aim is to eradicate this «cultural poison»54 cleverly instilled into the minds of blacks, and which now seems to be an integral part of their imaginations and their representations.

Thus, in the face of this denial of history that opens up prospects of chronic destruction in the construction of the black man’s personality, it becomes indispensable for Africans to learn and understand...
their true history and true civilization, in order to know themselves better and, thanks to the knowledge of their own past, to render outdated, grotesque and harmless, these assimilationist cultural weapons.

Diop is against those who think that it is useless to delve into the «rubble» of the past, because today’s problems cannot wait, and arise in a world given to speed, and characterized by a trend towards unification and the overdevelopment of new sciences and technologies that aim to solve all major problems.

Indeed, for Cheikh Anta Diop modernity does not mean breaking with the sources of the past, but, rather, to revisit it and show it to confront the other peoples on an equal footing, by relying on one’s past, a fully-understood past.

In recalling history, the aim is not just to extract things beautiful or good, but to promote the conservation of African cultures. Like AROA, for Cheikh Anta Diop, the aim is not to «create from scratch a history more beautiful than that of the others, so as to boost the morale of Africans during the period of struggle for independence, but to start from the obvious fact that every people has their own history».

His historical anthropology of African culture should play the same role as Greco-Latin antiquities that have been shaping the imagination of Western people for thousands of years. For this, we need to «decentralize universal sources », because, as technology and modern science come from Europe, in ancient times universal knowledge «flowed from the Nile Valley to the rest of the world», in particular towards Greece, which was only an intermediary link in the long march of the history of ideas and civilizations.

As pointed out by Théophile Obenga, Diop’s companion, «if Cheikh Anta Diop is interested in the foundations, origins, and first manifestations of African civilizations, it is because the first origins are the truth, and they have exceptional power to recall the entire temporal past, in one piece, thus establishing a certain historical link in subsequent trends and developments which nevertheless come from primordial manifestations».

Consequently, in trying to better understand the impact of the reintegration of Africa into the course of history, Théophile Obenga even recalled Martin Heidegger saying that «which has a history, can at the same time create one » since history is all about that which changes with, and over time.

Beyond this affirmation that turns Egypt into a historical landmark, there is the idea that Africa is a coherent whole that ultimately falls within a singular historical trajectory, starting from the first humanity and, through a series of migrations, culminates in Egyptian civilization which educated and civilized humanity.

According to Cheikh Anta Diop, within the general framework of the history of humanity, historical and cultural references are necessary. The message that he passes on to posterity is as follows: «the African who has understood us is the one who, after reading our books, will have felt emerge in him another man, endowed with a historical conscience; a true creator, a Prometheus carrying a new civilization, and fully aware of what the whole earth owes to his ancestral genius in all the fields of science, culture and religion». It is also the approach of AROA which seeks, from more modern communication tools, to account for the actual day-to-day history of Africans, giving it a causal and forward-looking interpretation.

II/- The concept of «African Renaissance»: thinking out of a new utopia between tradition and modernity

The time of political independences resembles that of disillusions. With the fall in commodity prices in the early second decade of independences, African leaders found that the means of redistribution of resources no longer worked, and that policies to diversify exports and for industrialization were virtually non-existent.

The system of Government loans of the sixties and seventies quickly proved inadequate and precarious, and unmistakably drove African States towards over-indebtedness. Between 1980 and 1990, the continent’s total external debt went from 28.5% to 109.4% of its Gross National Product (GNP).

Under these conditions, international financial institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) intervened directly with structural adjustment programs, imposing strategies to get out of liberal crises, to reduce State functions and expenditures, and forget about State intervention.

56 Martin Heidegger, 1986 Being and Time, translated from German by François Vezin, Paris, Gallimard, p. 443
Thus, States’ withdrawal was a response to a specific economic crisis, but it was also part of a scheme for disseminating liberal ideas into the management of public affairs. However, the expected outcomes did not materialize.

At budgetary level, the reduction in public spending aggravated the crisis by limiting the possibilities of States to meet the needs for social services, because of an option for debt-servicing. At global level, this reduction had a direct effect on the economy by destroying a large share of public sector jobs, and more broadly, by limiting States’ ability to intervene in different economic sectors.

The already scarce resources of African States born of colonial administration were drastically reduced. This resulted notably in a weakening of States capacity to model and develop their territories, as evidenced by the conditions of the dilapidated state of their industries and institutions, which found it difficult to adapt to the daily lives of the populations and, in particular, to meet the latter’s needs.

This time of African disillusionment calls for the return of the ideological dimension in the African political debate, and raises some epistemological questions on African politics, and the fact of thinking about politics in Africa between tradition and modernity or between individuals and communities.

This disillusionment can be explained, first of all, by the antithetical character of the notions of tradition and modernity in the Western scientific literature, inherited by Africa from an administrative point of view, and which, generally, accounted for their relationship in terms of conflict.

In terms of development, modernity corresponds to a level of scientific transformations, coupled with technical developments. This is why, in the light of such criteria, modernity would mean a clean break from tradition.

Common experience shows that what is modern, today, will belong to the past tomorrow. In the same way, what was already relegated to the past can reappear to be part of the present. Also, in the artistic field, some clothing styles formerly outdated come back into today’s fashion without any difficulty. This suffices to show the insignificance of a radical break between the terms tradition and modernity, especially, since a closer look can reveal that, between these two notions, there are also some overlaps; this is particularly true in Africa, where individuals are at the crossroads of several memberships of apparently different orders, but which meet under certain circumstances.

From this point of view, according to the Cameroonian historian and political scientist Achille Mbembe\(^58\), it is essential to start from the theoretical configuration which philosophically apprehends politics as a place for effective practical reason, then, to seize the process of African production of political modernity in terms of innovation and emancipation of Africans, by highlighting the close relationship between tradition and modernity, in particular concerning the management, sustainability and stability of power.

For the philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne, launching a dialogue between tradition and modernity in Africa translates concretely into politics, by understanding that «intellectual activity must be pragmatic\(^59\), and must come before political activity to enlighten and allow it to rectify itself, by finding its starting points in issues themselves, according to the recommendation of Edmund Husserl, “seeking our starting points by freely getting to the core of issues themselves, and of concomitant requirements”.

This urgent methodological, or even epistemological, break is legitimate for many African thinkers like the Senegalese economist Felwine Sarr who, in his essay «Afrotopia» calls into question the methodologies and criteria of rating agencies on Africa, which are far from taking into consideration some crucial aspects for a perfect understanding of the mechanisms that govern African societies. He pleads for a new approach to what would not necessarily be called «development» or «progress», but rather «well-being».

According to Souleymane Bachir Diagne, the reoriented African thought must shake up our mental comfort about the most widespread opinions, and force us to take a back-seat in order to reappraise, in a multidimensional way, contemporary realities, not advocating the existence of a single ego, but of many «egos».

The main difference that post-colonialism brings to the epistemological approach to African studies is critical thinking, directed towards the future, positioning itself basically as thinking about the future days of the African future.

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\(^{59}\) Souleymane Bachir Diagne, 2010, Philosophizing for a New Africa for an Education for the Open Society in Africa, Policy Dialogue Series n° 1, Dakar, Codesria
On June 16, 1999, during his inauguration as President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki proclaimed that “the 21st century will be African”.

This prophetic declaration is symptomatic of the views on legitimization that he developed around the idea of Renaissance of the African continent. The “African Renaissance” has thus gradually become an unavoidable theme of the African political jargon, whether it is criticized as being purely rhetorical or creates quite a debate around its definition.

While this Renaissance was essentially conceptualized in South Africa, with Thabo Mbeki to provide a framework for South African post-apartheid politics, his supporters are clearly more ambitious. For Mbeki’s colleagues, it is a broader concept, covering both the past and the present of the continent and its future.

However, its exact definition remains unclear; but as early as April 1998, Thabo Mbeki, then Vice-President, delivered a speech entirely devoted to this probable Renaissance, before the United Nations University in Tokyo. Before an audience of academics and young students, he recalled that “the Africa of the 21st century has a future of dignity, peace, stability and prosperity”. In his mind, African children must become full-fledged citizens of the world, recognized and respected as equals on the international scene.

He shares this belief in African Renaissance with Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade who, under his Omega60 Plan, thinks that “we need to rekindle Africa’s pride”. For this, the continent itself must “restore a political and economic order, by substantially renovating its method of government and administration”.

Indeed, in the context of the formal celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of African independences, this renewal of the thought on the future of the African continent was variously and symbolically marked.

The Senegalese President made a decision to erect, on the rubbles of a now-extinct volcano, the African Renaissance Monument, which he inaugurated on April 3rd, 2010 during the World Festival of Black Arts (Fesman). This was a Monument he dedicated to African youths, who were “resolutely committed to renewal in all areas”.

On the artistic and historical level, many productions now echo the history of the black world’s thought in urban popular music, which gives a tremendous impetus to many social movements, making them understand that it is time “To come out of the great night”, to paraphrase the title of a political essay by Achille Mbembé, which also appeared in this context of renewal. The seminars organized by him and writer and economist Felwine Sarr, also reflect a new approach of recentralization of the production of knowledge and culture on Africa, by Africa and Africans, here and elsewhere.

On the political level, the solemn declaration made in 2013 by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union61, reaffirmed a commitment to, and the promotion, of a pan-African consciousness for a speedy development of the continent. In accordance with this, the African Union Commission (AUC), in close collaboration with Africa Partnership for Africa’s Development, NEPAD’s Coordination Agency, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), is engaged in the process of defining a continental agenda for the next fifty years. This program, called «Agenda 2063”62, could be spelled out in operational terms, with short-term (10 years), medium-term (10-25 years), and long-term (25-50 years) plans. These concrete steps and goals will enable Africa to focus on economic and social change with a stress on «building an integrated and prosperous Africa, supported and led by its own citizens, and a dynamic force on the world scene ».

Thus, Agenda 2063 is a logical and natural extension of NEPAD and other such initiatives, such as the Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty ...., to meet new challenges on the continent. It is considered today as a new step in the efforts of Africans to catalyze the development of the continent and strengthen African unity, by drawing on previous experiences and achievements. For the AU, Agenda 2063 should be an inspiration to develop national and regional sustainable development plans, and a collective effort and an opportunity for Africans to determine their own destiny. But is Agenda 2063 a real project for the economic and political liberation of the continent? Does it not reproduce the neoliberal hegemonic patterns responsible for the backwardness of the continent?

Comparing the former plans and those of this generation, there is a clear dissimilarity between

60 Speech delivered by Mr. Abdoulaye WADE, President of the Republic of Senegal, in Geneva on December 11, 2003.
61 On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the OAU/AU
the language of the Lagos Action Plan and that of NEPAD. In the history of mainstream African thought or on the future of Africa, the gaps between the language of the Lagos Plan of Action for the implementation of the Monrovia Strategy for Africa’s Economic Development, and that of NEPAD are obvious.

The contrast is striking between the «resolution» of the OAU in 1980 «to adopt an ambitious regional approach based primarily on collective autonomy» and the reaffirmation in NEPAD of the dependence of «those who exploited with weapons, robbery and rape for 500 years, and who are invited to Africa» «for» development through a «new partnership» that has nothing new.

Regarding African countries, the submission to the same economic doctrines of the G7 (+1) -MIF- World Bank that can be found in NEPAD is total and unequivocal.

63 Preamble paragraph 1 of the LPA.

The AU and its Member States are still subjected to the command and control of the same «development partners». But another level of vulgarity is added to the submission of too many Member States, in boasting about the dubious distinction of being the «most attractive» or «most investor-friendly» destination in Africa.

As a contribution to the economic literature on Africa and the fight for its liberation - AROA could consider what various African states do, or do not do, to decolonize their economies:

- to prioritize or not, the production of goods and services consumed by their own populations, and the consumption of locally-made products;
- the progressive liberation or not, of divisions of labor to which Africans were first subjected by colonialism and kept by neo-colonialism and neoliberal globalization;
- a full study of the relations of comple-mentarity, not between their existing economies, but between natural and human resources across the whole continent, thus gradually = making colonial borders irrelevant, and promoting collective self-reliance among the peoples of a meaningful, sustainable and developmental Africa.
Powers and legitimacy: which alternative articulations in Africa?

The issue of power and its devolution is a significant one in the Alternative Report on Africa. It represents everywhere in the world, and particularly in Africa, a key to interpreting and analyzing the way societies are run, and a determinant of their stability and harmony. If democracy is considered by the international hegemonic system as the only way for actors, organizations, institutions, to define rules and practices for the accession to power and its transmission, it is far from responding adequately to the intrinsic values and cosmogonies of Africans. It works as an alien body that tries to adapt to an environment trying hard to come to terms with itself. How to bridge the gap between the procedures between our modern institutions and African societies? How to reinvent them so that they may be more legitimate? How to strengthen their appropriation by the majority or all of the populations that they are supposed to represent and embody? Finally, what kind of governance does Africa need if democracy is dictated from outside, and so warped?

The alternative articulations between legitimate governance and democracy in Africa cannot be seriously considered in the context of the major convergences on the continent. If the definition of democracy as «government of the people, by the people and for the people» is regarded as the rule, it should be obvious, on the most casual examination, that what passes for «democracy» in Africa can be considered, to some extent, as a «democratic fraud». Indeed, the combination of the «State market» economy at the national level, top-down submission to the dictates of «international market forces», the G7 (+1), the World Bank, the IMF, International rating agencies, and from the bottom up, the institutions, rules and rituals of competition tainted with kleptomania between «political parties», are unable to produce the government of African peoples by African peoples and for African peoples, even in principle. This leads to a limitation of democracy in Africa, enshrining the system described by Noam Chomsky and David Barsamian, in which «elites» are free to do what they want, as long as they promote or do not harm Western interests, and ape Western democracies65.

Electoral «democratization» has spread widely across the continent since the early 1990s. Coups d’état have become more difficult, after being one of the regularly used means of conquering power. They have sometimes even been positively perceived as necessary revolutions, or institutional consolidations, towards more democracies. The scarcity of coups d’état is at the same time the result of an internal rejection of African elites, and of the renunciation of Western powers to support or organize coups to protect their interests. But it is difficult to guarantee the finality of this scarcity.

The 1990s were more like the years of national sovereign conferences. In 1999, three-quarters of African countries held elections, most of them pluralistic. This democratic opening, however, has also been a source of new tensions. Competition in electoral processes creates new types of conflict that the one-party stranglehold was stifling.

In this context, we are witnessing a fragmentation of territorial spaces and a process of national integration. Different dynamics participate in these reconfigurations, with the intervention of new players in the State game. Thus, the global liberal wave will gradually reduce the fields of action of Governments, to the benefit of actors - private companies, NGOs, local communities, etc. – who are supposed to be more efficient, since they operate on subsidiary (sub-national) scales. Again, in the light of liberal ideology, the Government privatizes, by delegating to private groups, the management of some of its administrative and regulatory functions. Set up on independence, the public sector is gnawed into by surreptitious privatization.

As a result, the imperative of good governance and the participation of civil society, coupled with the deconcentration of public powers, have discredited Governments as a privileged interlocutor. New actors appear and build a link between funding organizations and local recipients. Development aid no longer goes to the central government alone; it is also directly intended for local authorities or local private institutions. International organizations, such as NGOs, now deal directly with decentralized structures, «village», «local community» or « community-based organization».

The sociology of organizations reveals that the process of the professional, social and legal integration of the individual into the political
community sometimes leads him or her to gradually break away from the community (rootedness). In other words, political modernity is certainly responsible for a greater affirmation of the individuality and autonomy of the citizens as mature people, but can lead, at the same time, to a strategic use (manipulation) of community memberships, based on personal interests, and targeted objectives.

In fact, in its relation to the community, the new African individual, who is a reflection of structural adjustments, uses strategies to mobilize all the material and symbolic resources available in the private community space, to acquire the advantages necessary for a better social position in the political public space. This is observable in most ethnic, religious or spiritual communities in sub-Saharan Africa.

Should we hypothesize that the invention of political modernity, far from following the trend of secularization, follows more readily that of religion or other transcendences, insofar as people rely on their numerous affiliations, and use various political, economic and personal leverages?66

Thus, people engage in inventing/reinventing democracy in sub-Saharan Africa, by interweaving politics and religion in the public space, have also produced, through contextualized rationalities, one of the forms of endogenous production of political modernity.

The challenges of governance are linked to those of globalization. According to Christophe Eberhard, they should lead to a pluralist reinvention of the legal frameworks in the world, instead of creating unbridled standardization from European legal frameworks. The idea of a «a pluriverse», a recognition of the diversity of legal frameworks from societies and their cosmogonies, is gaining ground. But the «market», which is the dominant authority of globalized societies, still seems powerful enough to annihilate resistances and regulation to live together and respect nature. However, the efforts for its re-embedding into the economy and society offer some exhilarating prospects67.

The role of leadership in the management of power, governance and democracy in Africa. What alternatives for the future?

One of the major issues concerning power, governance and democracy in Africa is that of leadership. Without patriotic, well-trained, selfless leaders, and concerned with the happiness of their people, no progress will be possible in Africa. On this issue, Africa has gone through several stages, since the pre-colonial period. Each step has left mixed results in terms of the exercise of power, the legitimacy of power, and the thorny issues of governance and democracy.

We will ask a few questions, the answers to which will serve as alternative solutions for Africa.

How has the historic legacy contributed to the management of power, the emergence of legitimate governance and the promotion of democracy? Has the break caused by the long period of the slave trade and of effective colonization, been well dealt with by Africans, since nominal independences? If not, how does this break condition the current situation?

This last question seems essential for several reasons. The consequences of the imitation of the values of the West on African leaders and elites, due to a profound «formatting» of the ruling classes, imposed by colonial authorities, are still here. In trying to answer these questions, this section will be structured around the following:

1. the various categories of African leaders and their impact on power, governance and democracy;
2. the current fragmentation of political spaces and their consequences on the management of power, governance and democracy;
3. the requirements for a reorganization of the spaces of power, and for the renewal of intellectual elites as alternative solutions.

66 This is essentially one of the theses defended by Cheikh Guèye, 2002, Touba the capital of Mourides, Paris, Enda-Karthala-IRD; and (Dir) State, Society and Islam in Senegal, an air of new times ? Karthala.
67 By proposing the re-embedding of the market in the economy, a component of society, Karl Polanyi proposes a more congenial society. For further developments, see Karl Polanyi, 1983, “The Great Transformation. The political and economic origins of our time», Paris, Editions Gallimard.
I-/ African leadership and its impact on power, governance and democracy

The issue of leadership in Africa generally involves three categories of actors: politicians, business leaders and intellectual elites. The role of each of these actors remains crucial in the management of power, governance and democracy.

I-1. African political leaders: from origins to today

The creation of African political leaders goes through two important stages: a historic legacy and struggles for independence.

I-1.1. Traditional leaders

Historically, from a political management point of view, Africa has had two types of societies, with or without a Government. Societies without any Government are called headless groups by anthropologists.

Societies having a Government are run by political powers of family origin, organized into well-structured chieftaincies. Except for a few rare examples, these chieftaincies were directed by kings selected from some families called a dynasty whose rules of succession were well-defined and knew very little contestation. These kings were surrounded by dignitaries from non-dynastic families. For example, among the Yorubas, almost all families participated in the exercise of power at all levels, from the king to trade chiefs through ministers, provincial governors, religious leaders, warlords, craftsman’s heads, etc.

On the basis of this distribution of power, one can talk of a democratic system. In this context, the setting for the exercise of power (the Palace), despite its impressive character, enjoyed no material comfort above that of the people.

In headless societies, power was collectively managed by families from different clans. Here, the rule of power is based on a consensus.

To protect themselves from temptations that could threaten the existing governance system, these two types of power hated capitalist accumulation. Excess produce was distributed to the poor and destitute. The greatest worth for most African societies was generosity through the equitable sharing of the goods produced. Thus, those considered as great African dignitaries did not come from builders but rather from the most generous people.

This lack of capitalist accumulation has been strongly criticized by Westerners, who believe that the current backwardness of the continent is largely due to it. This opinion today should be qualified in light of the negative consequences of capitalist accumulation on the environment, on equity and world peace.

I-1.2. Current political leaders

They all emerged as part of the struggles for independence after the last world war, but got organized only after Independence. These leaders belonged to several categories, according to their training, their level of education and the period of their emergence.

From 1960 to 1970, political power was exercised mainly by teachers and some doctors and union leaders. Despite their rather heterogeneous level of training, these first African leaders were guided in their actions by the same requirement: that of nationalism deemed essential to better get rid of the colonial yoke, and establish the beginnings of a true nation.

Despite the difficulties that these first leaders encountered in the management of their respective countries, they nevertheless left an important legacy that continues to serve as a reference today: Pan-Africanism, now a major requirement to better deal with the consequences of the balkanization of Africa.

The struggle undertaken in the name of nation-building and pan-Africanism had barely begun, when a new generation of leaders, the military, put an end to it. Thus, from 1970 to 1990, almost all African states, with the exception of just a few, fell into the hands of the military. This was the beginning of autocratic regimes, including in the few countries whose leaders were not from the military. It is the rule of single parties, resulting in the end of hopes born of independence.

The 1980-1990 period was particularly hard for African countries, due to a widespread economic recession and heavy debt. The search for a solution to this period of economic crisis led to the generalization of structural adjustment programs, the first of which dated back to 1979. The proper application of these programs could only be achieved in a political atmosphere of freedom and liberal economy. Thus, from 1990, Africa was subjected to a process of democratization of Government and society, with a return to a total multi-party system, and the arrival, on the African political scene, of a new generation of...
leaders made up of «civilized» military, old civilian leaders and young politicians, many of whom had served as advisers to military regimes between 1970 and 1990.

The advent of democracy in Africa has not brought about a radical transformation of political classes. The mixture of leaders of this democratic period, between civilians and military, did not allow democracy to be a true success and, above all, a factor of progress.

All in all, whether they were early nationalists, autocratic soldiers or leaders of the decade of structural adjustment, African political leaders have, since 1960, with a few exceptions, failed in many ways in their mission, by making Africa the least advanced continent on the planet. Thus, from 1960 to today, the State has never been owned by Africans. It is more the fact of foreign powers and a legacy of the colonial ideology. As a result, the political leaders that Africa has known so far are mostly seen as mere puppets in the pay of the dominant powers (Le Roy, 1997)88.

I-1.3. Business leaders

The issue of leaders goes beyond political leaders alone. The challenge of economic and social development is for both public and private sector leaders. Leaders can be classified into several categories:

- the leaders of the old European trading companies, of colonial origin, many of who are still responsible for major infrastructure and equipment works, without, of course, forgetting export mining and agricultural developers;
- foreigners living in Africa, in particular Arabs, largely dominated by Lebanese, Indo-Pakistanis and, recently, Chinese and Indians;
- Africans.

The origin of the old trading companies goes back to the 16th century, more precisely since the relations with the Portuguese between 1571 and 1580, which led to the appearance of the first European trading posts along the West African coast, and the beginning of the slave trade.

Between 1580 and 1713, trade with the Portuguese was relayed by the Dutch who had, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, one of the most powerful fleets in the world.

For the exploitation of the African coast, they organized themselves in charter companies, exclusively active in the “malague”t and ivory trade, as well as practicing subsidiary slave trade.

These Dutchmen were then replaced by the English and the French, from the eighteenth century onwards. The English settled along the West African coast, where they managed to set up powerful companies like Unilever, better known by its subsidiary, United African Company (UAC), and formed with companies from Bristol, Liverpool and London69.

French presence along West African coasts dates back to 1787, but did not take root until the 19th century with several commercial exploration missions organized by the Ministry of the Navy from 1838 onwards. From Bordeaux and Marseille-based companies, the French set up several companies along the coast. These companies, later on, turned into new business ventures, the most important being the Société Commerciale Ouest Africaine (SCOA) and the Compagnie Française d’Afrique Occidentale (CFAO), as well as a range of companies derived from them, such as Total, Colas, Dumez, Satom or Fougerolles (on the French side), or port operations such as the Bolloré and Maerskline groups70.

The Lebanese have always served as intermediaries for old-time trade companies. Most of them bought back the businesses deemed unprofitable by these companies, such as the distribution sector. In doing so, they have become, for some decades, among the main actors of the African economy (Charbonneau et Charbonneau, 1961; Desbordes, 1938; Hanna, 1958)71. Indo-Pakistanis have played a major role, in particular in English-speaking countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ghana. They still hold important economic sectors in these countries, including textiles, sugar, tea and distribution.

Recently, Chinese and Indians have invested in Africa and have emerged as major investors in several economic sectors, such as retail, mining and public works (Elenga-Ngaporo, 2004; 2005).

The intervention of Asians is part of the phenomenon of globalization, which has favored the opening of China and India to the international market.

Africa has become a major issue for these two countries, and their politicians clearly announce the reasons for their offensive on the continent.

Thanks to South-South cooperation, deemed «more equitable», Africa is seeking to get rid of Western supervision by diversifying its market and its resources in foreign direct investment. The results are for the moment conclusive, despite the concerns that this cooperation raises with regard to Chinese and Indian immigration, and unfair competition on the African markets.

The last category of economic actors is Africans whose weight remains dominant in the banking, insurance and trading sectors. These African entrepreneurs are of several categories and their origin goes back some to the slave trade, resulting from lineages involved in this trade. This is the case of several dignitaries from the African chiefdoms of the Gulf of Guinea, particularly in Ashanti, Danxomè and Yorubaland. From this trading activity, later relayed by the palm oil trade (in Danxomè), the first categories of African entrepreneurs were born, including both Afro-Brazilians and indigenous people.

These entrepreneurs, who later formed the «urban middle class», were helped by cocoa farmers in Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria. These formed «bourgeois planters», coming from both traditional chiefs and commoners. The originality of these planters is to have evolved into real agricultural producer unions, as is the case, for example, in Côte d’Ivoire, of the «Agricultural Syndicate» or, in Nigeria, of «AgbêKoya». The latter union remained very active until the Biafra Civil War, between 1960 and 1970. In the case of Côte d’Ivoire, it was these planters who were behind the creation of the Democratic Party of Côte d’Ivoire (PDCI), with Houphouët-Boigny as first President.

The last group of African entrepreneurs is that of women. They are particularly dynamic in Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Mali. These women are mainly involved in the textile and distribution sectors. Their role in financial accumulation is such that they were nicknamed the «Benz Nanas», in Togo, because of their big Mercedes cars, an outward sign of wealth. This female entrepreneurship has now expanded to Sahelian and, in particular, Malian women, who are active in dyeing rich basin cloth.

The children of these different categories of African entrepreneurs have generally been trained in the best universities and prestigious business schools in the United States, Great Britain and France, and have recently returned to Africa to control the banking, insurance, microfinance and trading sectors.

It is important to mention all these categories of actors here, firstly, because of the patronage relations that bind them to the current political leaders, and secondly, because of their financial means, thanks to which many of them have become king makers.

Regardless of the role that these business leaders play in African societies, the majority of them are confined to import-export activities and do not participate much in the evolution of their society, the future of which will depend on the industrial sector, a true lever of development.

I-2. African intellectual elites

The participation of intellectuals in power management in Africa can be analyzed in several stages. From 1960 to 1970, the first intellectuals were both revolutionary and pan-Africanist. Many were in the shadow of the early leaders as advisers. But their small number and, above all, their lack of knowledge of African realities, because of their long absence during their studies, did not allow them to play a significant role on the political scene during this first period of independence.

It was not until the second period, from 1970 to 1990, that certain intellectual elites played a fundamental role alongside the military, which they strongly influenced in the choice of Marxist-Leninist ideology. This is particularly the case in Congo-Brazzaville, Benin and in the former Upper Volta.

It was from 1990 that intellectual elites emerged as a political force, this time as embodying the liberal ideology and coming, for the most part, from international institutions and French and American universities.

To this category are added the leaders of the liberation wars of Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa. It is among these elites (from the liberation struggle) that Africa has known outstanding leaders such as Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Joachim Chissano (Mozambique) and Pedro Pires (Cap-Vert).

Unfortunately, the deep ideological divisions of the intellectual elites are behind the failure of the debate on development in Africa and the lack of alternative solutions to models from outside.

From this point of view, it can be pointed out that independence gained between 1960 and 1990 led
African intellectuals to the birth of several ideological movements - liberal, Marxist-Leninist and religious - which strongly shaped the management of power, governance and democracy. The advent of the democratic process that began in 1990 and the end of communism in the East, allowed a certain consensus in favor of capitalist ideology. It is especially echoed in the phenomenon of globalization. A few rare intellectuals, however, continue to defend a new approach to development that would start from the African renaissance (Do Nascimento, 2008)\(^72\).

72  José Do Nascimento (dir.)., 2008, The African Renaissance as an alternative to development, the terms of political choice in Africa, Paris, L’Harmattan.

II-/ The current fragmentation of political spaces and its consequences on power, governance and democracy

The issue of power, governance and democracy is not just political. It also pervades the question of the spatial framework within which these legitimacies are exercised. In relation to the territorial framework of these three concepts, three main challenges are to be addressed; those of the fragmentation of political spaces, historical consciousness, and knowledge.

II-1. Fragmentation of political spaces

The challenge of the fragmentation of political spaces has several aspects: first, that induced by the division of Africa among several colonizing powers - France, Great Britain, Germany, Portugal, France, Spain and Italy, then the territorial differences due to this partition. Within West Africa, we can distinguish three categories of countries, according to their surface areas and their populations:

- the smallest States, difficult to develop, with restrictions linked to surface areas and populations that jeopardize the chances of endogenous development: Cape Verde, 3,929 km\(^2\) and 538,535 inhabitants; The Gambia, 11,295 km\(^2\) and 1,967,709 inhabitants; Guinea-Bissau, 36,125 km\(^2\) and 1,747,061 inhabitants; Sierra Leone, 71,740 km\(^2\) and 6,295,000 inhabitants; Togo, 56,790 km\(^2\) and 6,191,155 inhabitants; Liberia, 111,369 km\(^2\) and 4,299,944 inhabitants; Benin, 114,763 km\(^2\) and 10,448,647 inhabitants.

- Intermediate States, some of which are well endowed in natural resources, but which suffer sorely from their weak consumer market: Ghana, 238,000 km\(^2\) and 27,043,093 inhabitants; Guinea, 245,857 km\(^2\) and 13,246,049 inhabitants; Senegal, 196,722 km\(^2\) and 12,767,556 inhabitants; Burkina Faso, 274,000 km\(^2\) and 16,967,845 inhabitants; Côte d’Ivoire, 322,463 km\(^2\) and 26,578,367 inhabitants.

- Vest labor spaces dominated by the Sahara Desert, unproductive most of the time except Nigeria (913,074 km\(^2\) and 186,053,386 inhabitants). Elsewhere, the «useful» part is even smaller than the surface area of intermediate states: Mauritania, 1,032,000 km\(^2\) and 3,596,702 inhabitants; Mali, 1,241,238 km\(^2\) and 15,839,538 inhabitants; Niger, 1,267,000 km\(^2\) and 16,068,994 inhabitants.\(^73\)

This geographical differentiation is all the more critical since the smallest states are the most numerous: 7 out of 16. It is also so, because few of the States in this group correspond to true homogeneous historical entities. Apart from Cape Verde, all the others are made up of a multitude of socio-cultural groups, the majority of which are crossed by several immaterial borders and invisible walls; such as, for example, Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba, Akan and Mandingo.

Considered by the former Organization of African Unity as an «African specificity», this fragmentation leads to three types of problems that hinder the proper control of the current conditions for development: isolation, too long and ill-defined borders, and underdevelopment of basic infrastructure.

But the most negative aspect of this fragmentation lies rather in the resulting territorial disorganization:

- a crisis of the State as a spatial entity;
- complex and exacerbated mobility;
- lacunary spaces and striated areas;
- increasing spatial differentiation within the same territory.

The crisis of the State as a spatial entity is first shown by a lack of financial means to govern.

73 These statistical data mentioned here are taken from the Demographic Assessment of the SDER (Regional Development Scheme of the Regional Area) of WAEMU, 2016.
The weight of debt is so heavy that the resulting external intervention, in particular that of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, removes from these States the basic means of exercising their sovereignty. This weak regulation leads to absenteeism among some civil servants, concerned with the safety of their income, often through corruption and an informal economy.

All in all, the transformation that results from the fragmentation of political systems in Africa is at the root of the State crisis and results in great geographical mobility, which also creates growing spatial differentiation within the same country. This is clearly seen through the awareness of ethnic groups and the strengthening of their autonomy vis-à-vis the central Government. In other words, we are now witnessing a form of national spatial fragmentation, with different tribal units clinging to their own identity.

This dynamic has led to the emergence of new territorial entities that, today, have the foundation stone for political forces through many associations. This differentiation, which is growing, can inspire the following spatial typology:

- extroversion areas that form around the hubs of a so-called modern economy: regarding rural modernization or mining, whose dynamism and prosperity are based on a privileged relationship with the outside world;
- urban areas that are sometimes created ex nihilo, from a port, an administrative center or a mining operation;
- trading areas that are structured around large trade flows, sometimes over long distances.

These different areas reinforce territorial fragmentation from divergent interests, with the result that there are no real hubs around which the national space could be structured. It is this territorial fragmentation that gives a certain scope to the different forms of networks and migratory flows, and the best way to deal with them properly lies in new approaches to spatial planning.

II-2. Fragmentation of historical consciousness

The fragmentation of historical consciousness can be understood through the differences between «white» and «black» Africa; that is, between the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa; and, on the other hand, through colonial legacies. Although a stakeholder of the African Union, the Maghreb negotiates its alliances at the same time with the countries of the Mediterranean basin. Some of these states, such as Morocco and Egypt, are very advanced in negotiations regarding partnership agreements with the European Union. Sub-Saharan Africa is trying a diversification strategy by seeking to develop new relations with emerging countries; China and India, on the one hand, and those of Latin America, on the other.

The other aspect of historical fragmentation lies in the two practices stemming from the colonial legacy: assimilation, «applied» by France, and «indigenization», observed by the United Kingdom. Both have encountered serious limitations. This historical fragmentation does not facilitate a general awareness of the problems to be solved, so much so that the more nationalistic Anglophone countries often consider their French-speaking counterparts too dependent on France.

II-3. Fragmentation of knowledge

The fragmentation of knowledge relates on the one hand, to the antagonism between the endogenous acquisitions and the knowledge inherited from the colonial/neo-colonial school; on the other hand, to the respective impact of religions (notably Christianity, Islam and animism) on the ideological values of development. These different forms of fragmentation have led to strong ideological divergences and a lack of cultural roots.

The ideological differences between African leaders were particularly pronounced during the East-West confrontation around liberal and Marxist ideologies. The end of communism has substantially limited their scope, without, however, eliminating them. The differences between African political leaders are currently manifested in two ways: the war for leadership, both on the continent and among the colonizing powers, and the question of democracy and of the nature of civil or military regimes. These contradictions were always exacerbated between Félix Houphouët-Boigny, during his lifetime, and his French-speaking peers; and between French-speaking and English-speaking countries. From this point of view, the «fear» of Nigeria remains endemic. And if France is still trying to influence its former colonies through its involvement in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), it is precisely to thwart the tendency to too much influence from the «African giant».
The question of leadership is linked to the need to see real democratic traditions develop in Africa, in the way of governing and managing public affairs. The democratization of both State and society, demanded by donors and strongly desired by Africans, pits many heads of state against each other, as was the case in the East-West clashes.

This fragmentation concerns the countries whose former autocratic leaders find it difficult to stay in power, including Togo and Guinea, and the states whose leaders come from National Sovereign Conferences. The advent of democracy has become both a hope and a means of blackmail, which weakens the will of African leaders to fight for the same goal of development.

This ideological difficulty leads to profound differences in the role of culture in the process of national development. Anglophone, Portuguese and French-speaking countries are divided on this issue, particularly with regard to the rooting of citizens in their national cultures. This rootedness seems much deeper in the English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries than in the French-speaking countries. The assimilation policy proposed by France has tended to distance Francophones from the need to make culture a major development issue. In this connection, there is a real question of identity.

In other words, in Africa, in particular in the Francophone sphere, there is a lack of reference to a local value that would guide the action of the leaders. The lack of a reference value is a reflection of the artificial nature of States, whose inhabitants have an origin and a history attached to other, sometimes antagonistic, political areas, such as in Chad and Sudan, or Eritrea and Ethiopia. As a result, there are some major ethnic conflicts at the borders that ruin the chances of necessary consultation on local values as an inevitable support for sustainable development.

The difficulties faced by blacks at the Senegal River Valley, who see their future on Mauritanian territory being increasingly challenged by the Moors of Berber origin, are symptomatic of this phenomenon. They prevent Senegal and Mauritania from joining forces to manage the huge investments made in the development of the river or other common resources. To better face the different challenges, several missions will be necessary to new generations of leaders.

III-/ Reorganization of power, governance and democracy and renewal of elites

III-1 Reorganization of political systems

The reorganization of political systems is an alternative in Africa, to make the current territorial entities reliable, viable and secure. Nation-states inherited from colonization are in an ambivalent situation, real and fictional, formal and informal (Sawadogo, 2003, p. 47-51)74.

The state needs to be re-founded on new territorial scales in order to better face the various problems which hinder a good control of the current conditions of development, like isolation, borders too long or badly defined, and underdevelopment of basic infrastructure.

The consequences of the balkanization of the continent prevent African states from controlling the flows necessary to control their territories.

Its re-founding must address the new challenges facing Africa: globalization, the fight against poverty and the crises that result from democratic governance. These development goals, however, are expensive and require new resources that can come only from the creation of new wealth. The riches we are dealing with here are not only monetary. What is also at stake is to work to make Africa prosper, by acting on the main determinants of this wealth, such as strengthening productive, technological and innovation capacities.…

These capabilities are now essential to reverse current trends in wealth creation, too focused on a cash crop economy with a low-added value. To do this, it will be necessary to exploit the instruments that make it possible to intervene effectively in these determinants, which can be summed up in a few points:

- promotion of natural capital, consisting in natural resources;
- physical capital, consisting of machinery and built infrastructure, as well as lands and urban areas developed for human habitation;

... Un rapport pour l’Afrique et par l’Afrique

- immaterial capital including, on the one hand, human capital and, on the other, high quality institutions. It is the most important part of the riches of nations. Although this intangible capital is nowhere capitalized, it is partly the fruit of training, education and know-how, acquired by the populations of the nation. To this must be added the trust that exists between the various components of the nation, and their ability to work together in a coordinated manner for their well-being;

- governance that stimulates the overall productivity of the economy and strengthens coexistence.

Without these elements, it will be difficult to put in place a participatory, effective, efficient, functional operational system of management. Likewise, without well-trained, forward-thinking elites, ready to engage in decisive reforms that will have positive impacts on state institutions, nothing will be possible.

III-2. Renewal of intellectual elites

The renewal of African elites should lead to the formation of a new generation of leaders and allow a better contribution of the African Diaspora to the development of the continent. Better management of power, governance and democracy implies the emergence of new elites bringing together different skills, including the ability to:

- be more critical of the current debate on development;
- acquire new knowledge (that is) lacking in Africa, in the fields of economic forecasting, mediation and new information and communication technologies;
- embrace development values such as equity, probity, and shared management of current riches.

The recent assessment of the emergence of African leaders in Africa clearly indicates that no credible alternative can be proposed without the complete renewal of the leadership culture. For this, it will be necessary to tackle a few prerequisites, three of which seem fundamental:

1. reform of the school and university system. It has become a key requirement to end the colonial pact and get rid of its consequences on our mentality. The Colonial School has over-formatted the elites for these not to be useful to African society in working to renew African culture and languages. The added value of Asian societies over Black Africa is the promotion of their local cultures and languages. In doing so, Asians have broken down the partition between their leader and their people;

2. changing the current paradigm of development. The one currently in vogue favors rather the market economy resulting, for Africans, «in unequal exchange» and a production model based on cash crop and predatory economy;

3. changing relations between elites and the people. The elites must function as lamps that enlighten the people, and not as exploiters for personal ends. Today, the majority of elites are rather at the service of the dominant powers. We must end this by making a clean break. This can only be done through the school and university reform.

These three prerequisites would be the essential links for better management of power, governance and democracy. To achieve this, we need a new generation of leaders who will take to heart these few concerns: the audacity to make a clean break, and the ability to anticipate, by mastering and controlling change; loyalty to oneself and the people; respect for the values of duty, honor and struggle for the nation and the ability to create a fair partnership system with the rest of the world. Despite this need for a real reorganization of governance in Africa, and until the seeds of change are confirmed and consolidated, how do Africans live and contribute to the governance of their countries today?

If democracy is an external injunction, badly distorted, what kind of governance does Africa need?

I-1. What do Africans themselves really think about it?

The findings of the Afro-barometer survey published in April 2014, and carried out in 34 African countries, are clear: seven out of ten Africans (71%) prefer democracy to any other political regime. The survey shows, however, that there is a substantial gap between the popular demand for democracy and its effective implementation by the ruling elites. Indeed, less than half of the respondents (43%) consider their country a democracy, and say they are satisfied with its functioning.

The results vary from one country to another, whether it is the degree of popular support for democracy or the assessment of its effectiveness. Less than
half the number of adults prefer democracy in Madagascar (39%) and Swaziland (46%), just over half in Sudan, Algeria or Egypt, while almost everyone (over 80%) supports democracy in Liberia, Cape Verde, Ghana, Tanzania, Senegal or Zambia. As for the percentage of people who are satisfied with the implementation of democracy in their country, it is 75%, 74%, 72% and 71%, respectively in Tanzania, Ghana, Mauritius and Botswana, and 50% in Burkina Faso, 31% in Mali or 21% in Togo.

The findings of this study, based on polls conducted in the countries of the continent are rather reassuring for the proponents of democracy. The Democracy Demand Index score, measured by Afro-Barometer in sixteen countries in 2002 and 2012, and which include both the support expressed by citizens for democracy and the rejection of any form of autocratic rule (regime military, single party or personal dictatorship), has increased by fifteen points in one decade. This means that democracy continues to gain ground in African minds, despite the inadequacies and failures of democratization attempts in many countries over the last decade, and the mixed performances of democratic regimes in the areas of economic and social development, on even political stability and security of the populations.

However, we must avoid any hasty proclamation of a definitive victory of the aspirations for democracy in Africa. If, according to Afro-Barometer polls, almost all (93%) Africans reject at least one form of autocracy, less than half (46%) systematically consider democracy the only form of government to which populations aspire. The rejection, in particular, of military regimes is not absolute. The time when people believed in the ability of countries to experience rapid political changes leading to the establishment of democratic regimes worthy of the name, is over. The frenzy born of the outbreak of the «Arab revolutions» in 2011 has quickly fallen. The aftermath of the overthrow of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt has been very difficult to varying degrees. If Tunisia has a good chance of finding in the medium term a political balance compatible with the exercise of democracy and respect for the fundamental freedoms of the citizens, despite the rise of fundamentalism in political representations (Ennahdha75), post-Egypt Mubarak and post-Morsi have become more militarized than democratized, while post-Gaddafi Libya is simply breaking up.

In North Africa, as in other regions of the continent, discussions on the obstacles and constraints to democratization, as well as the analysis of choices of democratic models, cannot ignore the individual political trajectories of countries and the nature of their real political way of operating. Almost all African countries today have formal democratic regimes, and the African Union makes a strong case, in its texts and in the speeches of its leaders, only for democracy, good governance, respect for freedoms and human rights.

Paradoxically, less than half of Africans believe that they live in a democratic country; if the only criterion for characterizing a democratic regime is the real possibility for citizens to choose their leaders and dismiss them by vote.

This presupposes, at a minimum, the organization of plural, free, regular elections, effectively reflecting the choice of voters, and in which the results of the elections are not always known in advance. In this respect, the list of democratic countries represents barely a third of the 54 African countries. However, there is hope since the list of «true» African democracies is far from being fixed, in a continent still in motion, whose states within their present borders are only five to six decades old.

The first requirement for a majority of African countries is to work towards a minimal reconciliation between the democratic ambitions and respect for the rule of law, proclaimed in their fundamental laws, and the reality of political and institutional practices imposed by the elites, with more or less sophistication and refinement, on their fellow citizens.

There is no need to exemplify Western democracies. The way ahead is indicated by the hard core of African countries that are at the top of the recognized ranking regarding democracy and good governance: Cape Verde, Mauritius, Botswana, South Africa, Seychelles, Ghana, Namibia, Lesotho, Zambia, Senegal ... The list is certainly fluctuating, but in each of the regions of the continent, everyone knows those countries where the sovereignty of the people regularly have the opportunity to express themselves and assert themselves; those where popular sovereignty is a fiction, and those where it dares to challenge the sovereignty of the more powerful only from time to time, at the risk of those who believe in it too much.

75 In fact, Ennahdha has no organic connection with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood but he shares their ideology. Ennahdha is, in a fairly classic way for the late 1970s, in an ultra-conservative movement.
African countries held up as examples of democracy have elites that have provided their country with democratic rules and have believed in it strongly enough, to make their fellow citizens think that these rules should actually govern the political, economic and social.

The countries mentioned above are far from being perfect democracies, where the observable practices systematically correspond to the values, principles and prescriptions of their constitutional provisions. The political actors in these countries are not all honest and deeply committed to the sanctification of democracy, nor are the populations they represent and lead. But, at some important moments in their contemporary history, they have had elites who, whatever their motivations, provided their country with democratic rules, and believed in them strongly enough to make a significant part of their fellow citizens feel that these rules should be taken seriously, and, effectively govern the political, economic and social life of the national community.

It is the same process which, over a much longer period of time and according to the circumstances of each era, has erected the oldest and most resilient democracies in the West. These democracies are far from perfect. But there are limits, set by democratic culture that has gradually become embedded in it, that can be very difficult to overcome, and, men and women will find hard to bypass the rules in order to conquer power. In a large number of formally democratic African countries, there are no limits to the adulteration of democracy. This must change, in the first place.

Adopting rules and, then, devoting all one's energy and creativity to circumventing or manipulating them for one's own benefit, is the fundamental characteristic of real practices in fake democracies. They are in fact based on the permanent lie of elites to citizens, which is not long in becoming an agreed lie between political and civil society. False democracies convey the message to all, including the younger generations, that democracy does not need ethics to function, and that the models to follow are those of political entrepreneurs who will stop at nothing to achieve their goals of capturing power and riches.

By freeing the political game and, therefore, the management of the state at the highest level from any limit set by ethics, these regimes will just encourage the whole society to relativize the importance of respect for rules in all areas, and at all levels of responsibility. Finally, because the expected benefits of democracy only materialize when it is real and substantial - while its disadvantages and opportunity costs are obvious, even when it is only factitious and formal, deep-rooted false democracies in Africa are a threat to the survival of the ideal of genuine democracy, and to the sustainability of the continent's most credible democratic regimes.

Why and how to rebuild governance in Africa?

The third millennium has begun with a major global crisis of governance. Institutional models find it very difficult to provide a satisfactory and sustainable response to the new challenges and strategic issues of our time. The almost complete victory of economics, the loss of political meaning, the breakdown of social ties, mutual distrust between civilizations and religions, an endangered environment, the increasing resort to force and terror, the unbearable inequalities between rich and poor, the significant worsening of poverty, ignorance and hatred, all plunge humanity into both total and global insecurity.

76 Between and within states, these same imbalances and dysfunctions operate!
This global crisis of governance, however, takes specific forms in Africa where it expresses itself in a particular way.

Postcolonial States are experiencing a deep structural crisis. Traditional mechanisms of social regulation are weakened and societies are struggling to cope with the mutations of an inevitable reconfiguration process. Governance is undoubtedly the main determinant of the difficulties affecting African societies. It is the major source of existing crises.

Because of this acuteness of the crisis, in Africa, governance has become, in recent years, a fashionable theme. Everyone recognizes that its evolution is a condition for the success of all other development efforts. As a result, initiatives are increasing at all levels, from local to continental, but with different, even contradictory, conceptions of the nature of governance and of the strategy to change it. The link between these initiatives and significant progress in the case of the Black Continent remains hypothetical.

The expected progress rests upon a deep re-appraisal of the foundations of unity, a reorganization of governance, and not on cosmetic reforms in the regulation of public affairs. The approach to governance issues in Africa has, for a long time, been biased by a double misunderstanding, both on grounds of economism and for sociological reasons.

Economism postulates a priori that only the growth of the GDP counts, whereas sociology, based on sociological presupposition, considers that Western-style consumer societies was the ideal kind for all the human societies. The recent food, monetary and financial crises have demonstrated the impasse to which the world would lead a development model based on a frantic race for growth and consumption, with corollaries such as speed, waste, pollution, the widening of social inequalities...

Therefore, the fundamental challenge of the reorganization of governance in Africa is to reconcile State and society, by matching institutions and rules of governance with the realities of African societies and culture, while bringing concrete and lasting responses to the material and immaterial aspirations of the populations.

1. Challenges related to legitimate governance in Africa

Given the state of economic, political and social degradation of State and society in Africa for so long, legitimate governance can be harnessed as a critical path - «governance, seen as an art of walking» - to create mechanisms capable of inducing change over time, producing the best multiplier effects and capitalizing on major global evolutionary trends.

These include working on the construction of States and, particularly, on its institutionalization, strengthening its legitimacy, creating a self-centered economic model capable of reconciling economic efficiency and social justice, and the creation of conditions for a better integration of Africa in the world. It is about building States anchored in society. This imperative is linked to at least three fundamental issues: (i) a better articulation between social (dynamics) and institutional dynamics to strengthen State legitimacy, (ii) the strengthening of democracy and of the consensus on the modes of coexistence, and (iii) access for all to basic social services.

b) Strengthening the legitimacy of States through articulation between institutional dynamics and the diversity of social dynamics

After more than half a century, relations between postcolonial African States and societies remain either disjointed or based on reciprocal instrumentalization, or sometimes even on a conflict between representations and practices of power. The unity of power, and its political, institutional and legal consequences postulated by the concept of the nation-state adopted at the time of independence, thus comes up against diversity and social pluralism.

The lack of State legitimacy is therefore the first challenge to be met in the quest for an African State, reconciled with its history and its cultural and social values, while meeting the requirements of a globalized world, in order to cope with the inadequacy and extraversion of its modes of regulation.

For the State to be a legitimate body, it must first know about, and recognize, the diversity of its territorial, socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and political, components. Then it will be in a position to build the factors of national unity. Recognition of pluralism, particularly legal and institutional, can thus be a powerful factor in regulating conflicts that undermine the continent. Strategically, decentralization can be, in Africa, the main means to achieve this articulation between unity and diversity, and to redefine the new social bases of the State.
c) Strengthening democratic processes and the consensus on the modes of living together

The euphoria created by the democratic achievements of the 1980s and 1990s is beginning to give way to a great challenge to the progress made in terms of the rule of law, political pluralism and respect for individual and collective freedoms. The rise of democracy has accompanied by a big promotion for constitutionalism. Strong consensuses were thus been built, such as the limitation of presidential mandates, the promotion of constitutional justice, the strengthening of parliaments. Most of the consensuses embedded in the Constitutions have been broken since the late 1990s. Formal democracies reinforce themselves in a new shape involving the use of democratic techniques and procedures, while insidiously perverting the values that underlie them. These reactions show that the modes of access and exercise of power cannot simply be achieved with the mere transfer of prescriptive models, and that Constitutions cannot fulfill their role of founding instruments, unless they reflect founding myths, procedures and techniques, proven by their confrontation with social realities. Another challenge for Africa is to strengthen democratic processes and to respect Constitutions, drawing on its own values, while benefiting from the best of international experiences. Should the measure be generalized of «adopting processes of constitutional revision or drawing up new constitutions, which are led by independent committees presided over by people of undoubted moral authority, and which involve all categories of the populations at each stage, provide for public debates in the main languages of the country, and for a reasonable duration of at least twelve months, before any validation of a constitutional text by parliamentary or referendum77 vote». Despite the limitations observed in terms of a guaranteed implementation of agreed conclusions, the experience of setting up a National Institutional Reform Committee corresponds to such a demand and should be better promoted.

d) Universal access to basic social services

People’s access to basic socio-economic services is a moral requirement and a necessity for every society aspiring to sustainable human development. For a long time, central Governments have provided mainly these services, in an attempt to consolidate the newly-acquired independences through an interventionist, separatist and socialist approach to development. Public reforms necessitated by inefficiencies in the delivery modes of these services, and supported by the political paradigm shifts of the 1980s, led to a transfer of competences from the central public sector to other levels of governance of the public, voluntary and private sectors.

Given the general configuration of African economies, which are largely based on the primary and informal sectors, at least two issues stand out: the optimal and sustainable development of the huge mining and agro-forestry potentials, and the search for a better articulation between formal and informal economic dynamics.

2. Optimal and sustainable development of the continent’s natural resources

The gap between the continent’s enormous natural wealth and the extreme poverty of its populations is probably the most striking reflection of the inability of states to build economic models, capable of exploiting this potential and of optimizing its economic and social effects. In fact, the model of colonial economy – extroverted and characterized by low levels of local production development and a vast domination of foreign investments - will have changed very little.

Studies on the social and solidarity-based economy certainly suggest alternatives for a revival of economies in Africa, an economic model that favors meeting the needs of individuals and communities in the face of unrestrained profit-making. As a result, one of the challenges is to regain sovereignty over natural resources and to start promoting endogenous economic development.

3. The search for a better articulation between informal and formal economic dynamics

Social and solidarity economy in Africa refers to the so-called “informal78 sector”. Indeed, this sector sometimes represents more than 70% of economic activities and more than 60% of employment.


With its flexibility, its extreme dynamism, its entrenchment in the social environment, this economic option fulfills major roles in terms of creation of wealth and amortization of the social effects of the successive economic crises which have been confronting African states since independence.

As long as the harmful effects (very low taxation, lack of transparency, fraud and predation) are limited, the «informal» sector can constitute a formidable transition lever towards a formalized and sophisticated economy. From this perspective, the local stage is the appropriate strategic scale for initiating policies that would progressively reduce the bad effects of the informal economy, while facilitating dynamic exchanges with the formal economy. It is indeed at the local level that economic achievements are highest, involving actors, activities, structures of the “informal sector”. It is also at local level that the informal economy is at its most proficient in terms of production, redistribution of income, pooling of resources, meeting the needs of the family or community, and in dealing with social crises. The promotion of local economies is a major challenge for Africa in reclaiming its economy.

4. Strengthening regional integration processes

In the context of governance through regional integration, State-efficiency is increasingly dependent on the regional (regional integration) and international (globalization) relations in which countries are involved. The interplay between regional complementarities and competition on national markets constitute a powerful incentive for the development of the regional economy. But the success of such a long, costly process, especially demanding in terms of concessions and losses of sovereignty, requires, beyond technical and institutional mechanisms, an explicit political project.

The process must be widely discussed and progressively validated by all actors. At regional level, weakened states must be provided with a well-regulated framework for the exchange of goods and services, the harmonization of policies, the settlement of conflicts resolution, and for a strategic alliance with the rest of the world. It is in this respect that the fragmentation and compartmentalization of territories (national and regional) constitute a challenge for the construction of African States and have an explicit relationship with the first issue.

It is now widely accepted that integration is Africa’s best asset for both maximizing its remarkable potentials and minimizing the negative effects of globalization and changes in global economic governance. The global economic context is indeed marked by rapid changes that are profoundly transforming international economic and trade relations. These changes have shifted the traditional North-South and South-South demarcation lines to make room for new economic configurations, new trade rules and more interdependent actors. The proliferation of free trade agreements, which can be explained in part by the difficulties of multilateralism, and the proliferation of mega-regional trade agreements are generating reactions in all countries and in all regions; on the one hand, to maximize the positive potential of these changes and, on the other hand, to minimize their harmful effects.

The African continent has experienced large-scale institutional fragmentation. This has led to the coexistence and overlap of several communities that do not always share the same administrative trajectory, the same economic objectives and the same legal and political cohesion. Faced with the challenges posed by the fragmentation and multiplicity of integration spaces, the African Union has chosen to recognize only eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to constitute the institutional framework of African integration: the Community of Eastern Africa (CAE); the Southern African Development Community (SADC); the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); the Economic Community of Central Africa (ECCAS); the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); the Community of Sahelian-Saharan States (CENSAD).

Many initiatives have emerged in recent years in the African continent, to give substance to the political vision expressed by the founding fathers and their successors. These initiatives aim at reviving the process of creating a large continental community, through the free movement of goods, people, services and capital, and the harmonization and coordination of trade regimes. The political will behind was expressed in 1980 through the Lagos Plan of Action and, then, renewed in 1991 by the Abuja Treaty. Under this Treaty, whose ultimate goal is the advent of the African Economic Community by 2034, African countries should follow a linear process through the construction of RECs, the creation of a free exchange zone in 2017, a Customs Union in 2019, a Common Market in 2023, and an Economic and Monetary Union by 2028, the last step towards a full economic community.
RECs are in the making, although they do not all have the same level of integration. Negotiations on the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) were launched in 2015 in Johannesburg. Although the 2017 target date, which was set for their conclusion, has not been met, since the talks proved to be more difficult than expected, such negotiations aroused the enthusiasm of all African states. The realization of the CFTA should enable African countries to access the markets of their neighbors who, while being geographically close to each other, were nevertheless almost inaccessible to them, because of the numerous tariff and non-tariff barriers. Indeed, it is easier to do business with the countries of Europe, Asia or America, than with the countries in the same African region, sometimes sharing the same borders, as costs are extremely high, not to mention the weakness or lack of (support) infrastructure for trade. More seriously, products imported from outside the continent generally have easier access to mainland markets than African products themselves. It is therefore not surprising that intra-African trade is stagnating at about 10%, at a time when European intra-Community trade is approaching 70%.

As a step towards a partial realization of the African Economic and Trade Integration Project, the CFTA would serve as a cushion to deaden exogenous shocks. It should also, under certain conditions, help boost industrial development and employment.

However, the CFTA is not a panacea. The expected benefits should not hide the many risks that could reduce or even negate its benefits. If it is not embedded in a refocused cooperative African vision, away from the dominant liberal paradigm that reduces free trade areas to a mere space for competition, where the strongest have the right to enact the rules in their favor, the CFTA could become an extension of the world market, with its unfair rules, and give pride of place to multinational companies who are predatory and not very concerned with ethical, social and environmental aspects.

The CFTA is not against some significant challenges. They include, inter alia, the strategic management of negotiations, the effective consideration of the level of differentiated development between States, the involvement of non-state actors, the financing of the process and the harmonization of the commitments made with those taken during other conferences.

On this last aspect, there is a real need for harmonization and cohesion regarding the multilateral, regional and bilateral legal commitments of African countries and regions.

The common point for all African countries negotiating the CFTA is a simultaneous membership of several RECs in which they have made binding, and not necessarily complementary, commitments. As members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), they have also subscribed to multilateral trade rules and have, for the most part, concluded bilateral agreements, or are in the process of doing so, with partners from the North and South. These agreements put African countries in a tangle of rights and obligations that are difficult to unravel.

The most telling example of these inconsistencies is that each African country negotiating the CFTA is also a member of an REC with a specific Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU). According to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), if the EPAs are implemented before the establishment of the CFTA, they could undermine the expected benefits. This is the scenario towards which the EU is pushing, with the complicity of some African leaders.

It therefore seems obvious that the EPA should not be implemented, until the full implementation of the CFTA. African leaders should even demand its renegotiation, because the political and economic conditions in which it has been negotiated and concluded in certain regions, have evolved considerably: Europe has experienced BREXIT, which has changed its nature; African regions have been fragmented into different blocks as a result of the signing of the EPA; its 2020 Cotonou Agreement is about to expire and no one knows in what shape the next EU-ACP «partnership» will emerge.

A minimum spirit of anticipation and foresight would militate for a change of perspective, so as not to further disrupt the process of regional integration in Africa.

5. Decolonizing the economy of culture to unleash unsuspected potential

Upon conceptual and mental decolonization rest other types of economic and cultural refocusing. In the field of cultural economy, the works of Martial Ze Belinga show the importance recently taken by the economy of culture. This could be an opportunity for entire categories of the African populations and guide a refocusing consumption patterns and underlying mental configurations.79.

This economy of culture is beginning to have a real weight. Indeed, in 2008, a study cited by Martial Ze Belinga estimated the contribution of cultural activities in Mali at 2.38% of GDP and 5.8% of jobs, of which 3.8% for arts and crafts. What hampers its growth, however, is the acculturation of African elites, who mostly aspire only to a way of life based on Western imitation, and whose mindsets can no longer perceive the local excellence closer to home. These are acute sociological and collective psychology problems, since part of the intelligentsia sees intelligence as an imported product. As long as Africa does not secure the means to gain self-confidence, does not value its material and intangible resources, and continues to wait for a hypothetical development coming from the outside with benefits from export, things will not change. Under the current situation, raw materials will continue to drive out cultural matters. But, at bottom, everything depends on the resources that Africa will be able to mobilize, the knowledge that will be transmitted to it, the degree of self-awareness achieved, its capacities for alternative action. Its ability to criticize, on endogenous foundations, the current slogans about «the emergence of Africa» or «Africa, the last frontier of growth», will be decisive for the restoration of hope.

6. Contribution to the promotion of a new model of fairer and more sustainable globalization

In the vast process of globalization of interdependencies and economies in progress, Africa seems to be the continent that suffers the most from the disadvantages of this global process - loss of control by societies of their future, transformation of situations of poverty into situations of destitution, poverty, internal differentiation of societies that create glaring inequalities, overconsumption of raw materials and degradation of ecosystems - without making gains in return. On the one hand, there are dynamics of economic and cultural globalization going through Africa, and, on the other hand, it has a marginal place in the large-scale movement of (development of) commercial exchanges in the world. Africa must give itself the means to fully contribute to the debates on a new model of inclusive, multi-polar globalization, which generates equality, is committed to the preservation of the environment and biodiversity. Market regulation, as a dogma, is the major challenge to position the African continent within the global system.

Ultimately, if, to be legitimate, governance styles must take into account African realities and practices, these should be well-understood.

Do they still have the same meaning\textsuperscript{80}, the same content and the same relevance, today? Are they compatible with universal values and principles of governance referred to in today’s world? Can they enable Africans to make a relevant contribution to the global governance debate? But what does the referencing to African values involve? Are these universal or specific to Africa?

The thing is to build an African project that takes into account the values and realities of Africa, on the basis of the experiences and practices of all categories of actors. And if the project is to be designed by and for Africa, then African researchers need to be able to create credible thinking on the past and ongoing patterns of regulation in different societies. They should also be able to develop concrete proposals for change that take into account the real practices and experiences of the actors, documented in all their diversity, in order to draw common principles applicable and recognized by all. These challenges reveal the constancy of a requirement consubstantial with any attempt to reorganize governance in Africa, that of knowledge in this case.

In the light of the foregoing, AROA must be inspired by and fit into, the struggle for the decolonization of Africa and the replacement of false democracy on the continent with the government of the peoples of Africa, by the peoples of Africa and for the peoples of Africa.

The recognition of the vastness of Africa as a complex of multiethnic and multicultural peoples, who are historically diverse and with different resources and different agro-ecological challenges and opportunities for treatment, should lead AROA to refrain from seeking a standard model of «good», «democratic» or «legitimate» governance. AROA should therefore focus on governance systems and practices in Africa, in order to encourage exchange of experiences among the peoples of Africa, by providing actors with best practices and a platform for their validation in accordance with agreed African standards.

Recognizing, in particular, the fact that internal governance systems have political, economic, social, and environmental, security and cross-border implications at sub-regional and regional levels, this monitoring can include advocacy and governance recommendations that promote full citizenship for all.

\textsuperscript{80} Indeed, state negotiations are, in most cases, little accompanied by local expert knowledge. Certain realities and practices are detrimental to scientific work and the abundant existing literature.
Transformative sovereignty and desirable futures: What Africa in the making?

A tough, resilient and entrepreneurial Africa, despite a hostile international environment

A deep myth embodied by the slogan «Africa Rising» seized economic and political elites, just when Africa’s GDP stopped growing rapidly, that is, between 2002 and 2011. Yet, the myth still persists. In June 2017, Deutsche Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann told a conference in Berlin: «Africa is ready to take advantage of an open global economy. Its economic outlook is positive». The conference was organized by German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble to promote his G20 «Compact with Africa», whose «main goal is to reduce the level of risk for private investment» (but on the eve of German elections, the Minister and Merkel were obviously anxious to give the impression that the strategy would reduce the crisis of African refugees in Europe).83

As a matter of fact, after the peak of the 2011 commodity super cycle, and the collapse of prices, it was unreasonable to proclaim that Africa was prospering in an «open world economy», as many of the continent’s economies depend on minerals and oil fields, whose extraction is dominated by Transnational Corporations (TNCs), and whose prices have been continuously rising since 200284. A brief recovery in commodity prices in 2016 and the continued decline in the value of most African currencies, did not pave the way for renewed competition, business confidence, or TNC investment; but it rather catalyzed a new series of fiscal crises, extreme current account deficits, sovereign debt shortages, and deep social unrest.

In such a configuration, there is nothing to allow hope for a decisive recovery in the short and medium term, despite the hype surrounding the mega-infrastructure «One Belt, One Road» (OBOR) project of China, for example, touted to restore market demand for construction-related products.85 As Zhang Zhang explains, «While there is an element of competition between the USA and China over the global hegemony around OBOR, the main driver remains the pressure by «over-accumulation» in a typical capitalist economy, at the end of a long sequence of capitalist cyclical changes. However, in China, there is also an ongoing debate about whether it is economically rational to pay such large sums in low-return projects and high-risk countries, particularly in the case of massive infrastructure projects.»86 The biggest of the Silk Maritime Road projects reaching Africa was the 11 billion USD Bagamoyo Port, designed in 2013 to handle ten times as many containers as the neighboring port of Dar-Es-Salaam. - According to Forbes, the project «was seeking to become Africa’s largest port, once it was completed», but was canceled in 2016 because of according to Deloitte and Touche - «austerity measures taken by Tanzania to reduce a growing budget deficit».87

At the same time in Durban, the 20 billion USD-expansion of the continent’s main container port (which also aimed to increase by 8 the number of containers to 20 million per year by 2040) was delayed until 2032. Corruption in credit and the acquisition of locomotives (both from China) involving the South African parastatal Transnet, was one of the factors. A growing social opposition to the project is another. But the main problem was the collapse, after 2011, of the Baltic Dry Index, a sign of a deep crisis in global shipping.88 Although the ongoing construction of Lamu Port in Kenya, not far from the Somali border, provides for a link with the oil fields of South Sudan, the climate imposed by the civil war and Al-Shabaab

83 Bundesministerium der Finanzen, “Compact with Africa”, G20 Finance Ministers Meeting, Baden Baden (30 March 2017). The only African member of the G20, South Africa, was fully assimilated to the program at the July summit of heads of state in Hamburg, despite anti-Western statements by President Jacob Zuma.
84 However, with a sudden and significant decline of nearly 50% of the price of oil in 2008, consequence of the subprime crisis. Other extractive raw materials follow the same trends as oil. Chinese bulimia in raw materials keeps prices at unreasonably high levels.
85 China suffers from the apparent depletion of past sources of profitability, namely “a growing external market, a relatively large army of labor and a low debt ratio,” according to Hao Qi, 2017, “Dynamic outperformance rate “and the” new normality “of the Chinese economy,” Discussion paper from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Institute for Research in Economics, June 22.
attacks in Kenya (kidnapping of a senior official during the inauguration of the Lamu Space Plan in July), makes the project extremely risky. Moreover, the year 2017 was marked by numerous demonstrations from the community, against a coal-fired power plant, costing 2 billion USD, in the port, because of climate change.  

Although a 3.2 billion USD Nairobi-Mombasa railroad was recently built, and a 3.6 billion USD pipeline is planned; although Ethiopian production from sweatshops is booming, and can now be exported directly via the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway, again with the help of China, the economic crisis has halved the value of major infrastructure projects under construction in East Africa last year. Southern Africa also faced a 22% drop in the number of projects (85 in 2016), from USD 140 billion in 2015 to USD 93 billion in 2016, according to Deloitte. The Wall Street Journal reported other recent failures of megaprojects, whether due or not to China’s excessive ambitions regarding canceled railway initiatives in Nigeria (USD 7.5 billion) and Libya (USD 4.2 billion); oil expansion in Angola (USD: 3.4 billion) and Nigeria (USD 1.4 billion); an irreparably damaged coal-fired power plant in Botswana (USD 1 billion) and investments in metal smelting in the DRC and Ghana (USD 3 billion each). The biggest dam in the world, the 100 billion dollar Inga Hydropower project on the Congo River (three times the size of the Chinese Three Gorges), is also still waiting after the World Bank’s withdrawal last year, and the rejection of calls for a joint venture from Beijing in 2014, by the Obama Administration. The crisis in mining industries is also witnessing a fall in stock prices of most mining companies, by more than 75 percent compared to their levels in early 2015, led by those interested in Africa. Neither the entry of the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) nor the meager new promises of the G20 - primarily to subsidize multinationals – can hide the widespread stagnation within the world’s most important economic circuits for Africa, or even for global prosperity and environmental health.  

Even before the peak of raw materials in 2011, and their collapse of 2015, the neoliberal export-oriented strategy had very bad effects in terms of human development, gender equity and the environment. Although poverty, mortality, morbidity and education rates have improved somewhat (in particular after the G7 debt relief program in 2005, which gradually eliminated the prohibitive costs of the exploitation of basic public services), the conditions of daily life in Africa have not improved, especially since the beginning of the global recession of 2008.

Indeed, Africa’s per capita GDP levels have actually increased rapidly from 1998 to the present, but with very little spillover. In 2013, the chief economist of the African Development Bank, Mthuli Ncube, ventured to claim that «one in three Africans belongs to the middle classes». In 2017, the bank reiterated that «one of the main drivers of consumer demand in Africa is the continent’s ever-growing population (currently 1 billion) and the expansion of the middle classes». But Ncube defined the «middle class» as those who spend between 2 USD and 20 USD a day, with 20% in the 2 USD to 4 USD bracket, and 13% from 4 USD to 20 USD. Both categories represent the incomes of the poor in most African cities, whose price levels rank them among the most expensive in the world. Ncube’s own data revealed that the share of those who spent more than 20 USD a day was less than 5%, and was decreasing.

One of the main reasons for the disparity between the official debate on «Africa Rising» and the deep poverty of most of the continent’s populations remains the outright pillaging of resources, illicit financial flows (IFFs) and legal financial outflows in the shape of repatriated profits to the STN headquarters. The most promising areas of foreign direct investment (FDI) tend to be those that come in search of raw materials. After the collapse of raw materials, annual FDI inflows to Africa slowed by 15% between 2008 and 2016, despite that, pressures of mining industries on people and the environment have intensified, and the desperate reaction of companies increases abuses on industrial sites, environmental degradation, social violence and the exploitation of labor. The metabolism of capital against nature and society has increased, so that the social responsibility of mining companies has given way a lot, under its weight.
In mid 2017, Global Justice Now, an organization based in London, and several of its contributors published a study by Mark Curtis, estimating that 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa are «collectively net creditors of the rest of the world, to the tune of USD 41.3 billion» in 2015. According to Curtis:

1. «African countries received 161.6 billion USD in 2015 - mostly in the form of loans, personal transfers and grants. Yet, 203 billion USD has been taken out of Africa, either directly - mainly through the repatriation of corporate profits and the illegal transfer of money out of the continent - or through costs imposed by the rest of the world through climate change.

2. African countries receive about 19 billion USD in grant aid, but more than three times that amount (68 billion USD) went away through capital flight, mostly by multinational companies that deliberately dumped their imports and/or exports.

3. While Africans receive 31 billion USD in personal remittances from abroad, multinationals operating on the continent repatriate a similar amount (32 USD billion) in benefits, each year, to their home country.

4. African governments received 32.8 billion USD in loans in 2015, but paid 18 billion USD in debt interest and in principal, with the overall level of debt rising rapidly.

5. It is estimated that 29 billion USD a year is stolen in Africa due to the illegal exploitation of forests and fish resources, and trade in wild animals and plants. »

As the Curtis figures show, whether Western multinationals or the BRICS are responsible or not, the excessive profits that come out of Africa take many forms. Below we discuss FFIs, legal financial outflows, FDI flows, external debt, and South Africa's accrual of interest; new subsidies used for infrastructure financing, and uncompensated mining, oil and gas depletion. The continent is also threatened by land-grabbing, militarization and climate change. The cases of multilateral management offered by the Compact With Africa, the Bretton Woods credits and the UN climate funding, etc. cannot help. Only growing resistance from civil society can halt and reverse these trends.

1. **Illicit financial flows**

First, FFIs reflect many illegal forms of resources withdrawal from Africa, mainly in the mining sector. Multinationals employ a multitude of misleading tactics in this regard, including corporate overbilling, money transfer costs and other commercial scams, tax evasion and non-payment of royalties, «tax havens», bribes and outright theft of profits. Examples are rife: in South Africa, Sarah Bracking and Khadija Sharife reported that De Beers overcharged USD 2.83 billion worth of diamonds over six years. A report from Cape Town’s Alternative Information and Development Center showed that Lonmin platinum operations have been stealing hundreds of millions of dollars from Bermuda, since 2000. At a meeting in Bangalore in 2006, Vedanta’s CEO, Agarwal, boasted that in 2006 he had spent 25 million USD to buy Zambia’s Konkola copper mines, the largest in Africa, and made at least 500 million USD a year, apparently illegally.

FFI studies by the Washington-based NGO Global Financial Integrity, and by economist Léonce Ndikumana and colleagues at the University of Massachusetts show how they helped create an Africa that is both «more integrated, but more marginalized», concerning global trade. Under UNCTAD, Ndikumana subsequently produced a critical study in 2006 on extractive industries, in South Africa and Zambia in particular, that angered mining industry representatives who denounced the poor quality of the statistics provided by the governments of the two countries. Although this has required some readjustments or reframing, in particular for copper and gold exports, most of these criticisms of FFIs remain justified.

There are also political NGOs fighting IFFs in Africa and Southern countries, many of which have northern origins, such as Trust Africa, Global Financial Integrity (GFI), Tax Justice Network, Publish What You Pay and Eurodad. Much of the credit for making this a major African and world political affair is due to Raymond Baker, an American businessman working in Nigeria, before moving to the Brookings Institution where he began to talk on this issue. NGOs have also been behind the detection of FFI cases. They demand accountability, including the «Stop the Bleeding» campaign of Trust Africa. Linking the radical and liberal critics of transnational corporations and African elites, the new visibility of IFFs gives hope to many who want Africa's meager incomes to be...
recycled in poor countries, and not diverted to offshore financial centers. Nevertheless, the headquarters of some NGOs remain attached to the dubious theory that transparency can help detect, «disinfect», and deter corruption. Their main task is to make capitalism «cleaner» by highlighting problems like FFIs. Yet, it must be admitted that many NGOs, allied donors and grassroots activists have put enough pressure on governments and corporations to compel the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa to sponsor an FFI study led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki⁹⁹.

Published in mid 2015, the report reckons that FFIs from Africa exceed 50 billion USD every year.

The FFIs looting comes mainly, but not exclusively, from extractive industries. According to an even finer accounting than that of Thabo Mbeki, the report of the African Development Bank and its collaborators on the African Economic Outlook reckons that 319 billion USD were stolen from 2001 to 2010. The most serious cases related to metals amount to 84 billion USD; oil, 79 billion USD; natural gas, 34 billion USD; minerals, 33 billion USD; petroleum and coal products, 20 billion USD; farming, 17 billion USD; food products, 17 billion USD; machines, 17 billion USD; clothing, 14 billion USD; and iron and steel, 13 billion USD¹⁰⁰. Do these data support the joke that Africa is a victim of the curse of its resources, rather than of its poor governance?

². From illicit to licit financial flows

Even if FFIs were reduced, FDI would keep on impoverishing African countries in the form of legal financial flows (FFL). These are the profits and legal dividends sent to the headquarters of the Transnational Corporations, after the FDI started to be paid. The payments of these outflows, as well as the interest and the net commercial position, are called «current account». According to the IMF’s report on Regional Economic Outlook for the Subcontinent in mid 2017, the past 15 years have witnessed trade surpluses between Sub-Saharan African countries and the rest of the world, which reached 5.6 % of GDP in 2011, followed by lower net surpluses; then, in 2015-16, deficits of 3.1 and 2.0% of GDP, respectively, with more deficits projected by the IMF¹⁰¹.

The current account measures not only the balance of imports and exports, but also the flow of profits, dividends and interest. During the long period of the commodities boom, sub-Saharan Africa maintained a fair balance and, in 2004-2008, even registered an average surplus of 2.1 percent of GDP. But, in 2011, it entered a danger zone, with a current account deficit of 4.0% of GDP in 2016, led by Mozambique (-38%), the Republic of Congo (-29%) and Liberia (-25%). Including North African countries, the current account deficit for the continent as a whole was 6.5% of GDP in 2016, following the drop in oil prices to 26 USD per barrel in early 2016. Out of 54 African countries, 20 had double-digit deficits in 2016. It should be recalled that the 1998 crash of the major economies of East Asia was caused by current account deficits of only 5%.


To cover a current account deficit, inflows of external funds are needed. These inflows to Africa amounted to 178 billion USD in 2016, or 5 billion USD less than in 2015, mainly due to a 60% decline in capital inflows (purchases of debt securities or stock markets, in particular in the 3 main markets of Johannesburg, Cairo and Lagos). Overseas development assistance to Africa decreased by 2% in 2016, and remittances remained virtually unchanged.

3. Explosion of external debt

The growing current account deficit on the continent in turn requires state elites to attract even more FDI, in order to have hard currency to repay old FDI (usually in the form of profits and dividends) or if new investments are not available as seems to be the case, to make new loans abroad. As a result of these efforts to cover its payments and small trade deficit, Africa’s external debt is rapidly expanding. For sub-Saharan Africa, what was an external debt in the range of 170 USD to 210 billion USD between 1995 and 2005 (when G7 debt relief had lowered it by 10%) has risen to nearly of 400 billion USD in 2015102. Not only Chinese loans, but also a series of Eurobonds have become a heavy burden on many countries where, in 2016, they accounted for a substantial share of the total public debt: 48% in Gabon; 32% in Namibia; 26% in Côte d’Ivoire; 24% in Zambia; 16% in Ghana; 15% in Senegal; and 13% in Rwanda.

The 2017 African Economic Outlook report noted that «tighter conditions for increased debt financing have begun to worsen the burden of debt servicing, with an upward trend in the debt service-to-revenue ratio»103. For oil economies, debt servicing has increased sevenfold, going from an average of 8% of revenue in 2013 to 57% in 2016, Nigeria (66%) and Angola (60%) being the most affected. Domestic debt is another fear, since the slowdown has also generated «a general increase in non-performing loans, causing higher provisioning, pressure on bank profits and weighing on credit-worthiness».

In the case of the largest debtor on the continent, South Africa, its external debt rose from 25 billion USD in 1995 to 35 billion USD in 2005, jumping to about 150 billion USD today, doubling from 20% of GDP in 2001 to more than 40% today. The last time this ratio was reached was in 1985, because of sanctions against apartheid; South African President Pieter Botha failed to pay 13 billion USD in short-term debt, and imposed exchange contracts.

This was a signal to the English-speaking capitalist class that the end of Apartheid was near, and so they should hasten to make post-Apartheid arrangements favorable to the then-in-exile African National Congress. Unfortunately, these arrangements got South Africa much deeper into the world economy and, with a worsening of the current account deficit, deeper into external debt.104

4. Public subsidy for private benefits

Another constant threat to the continent is unrestrained oil and mineral development, despite falling prices, due to state subsidies. In 2017, the G20 proposed a «Compact with Africa» with less than a dozen pro-Western African states to provide State support for «public-private partnerships» across the continent, and attract institutional investors with state guarantees. According to the C20 Group of Civil Society Observers, this strategy resulted in the following:

- higher costs for citizens;
- worse services, secrecy,
- loss of democratic influence and financial risks for the public and the multinationals involved, who demand that their profits be repatriated in hard currency - even if the standard contract of services implies local currency expenditures and revenues, and impacts Africa’s external debt stocks, which are now reaching unprecedented levels in many countries. The «CwA» also says nothing about the problems concerning (and popular resistance is there) the protection of investors, such as the vague clause of «fair and equitable treatment» in investment agreements and the settlement of disputes between investors and states105.

The African Forum (AF) in Harare and the Network on Debt and Development, and the African Development Interchange Network) have made harsher criticisms. According to them, «There is every reason to fear that slavery and colonization will come back altogether.

Subsidies of the kind envisioned in the CWA and PIDA could reduce the worst of FDI, in particular by BRICS companies, such as the South African predatory enterprises mentioned above. Other companies with a dubious past include the mining companies: Brazil, Vale, responsible for mass displacements of the population in Mozambique; Russia’s Rosatom, which has a 100 billion USD nuclear reactor project with Pretoria, as well as advance agreements in several other African countries; Vedanta of India, which has a long mining tradition in Zambia, and various parastatal companies and Chinese companies107. The new BRICS108 Development Bank is a channel through which they plan to receive indirect financing grants in the form of loans at preferential rates.

The BRICS new wave of investment already appears to many in Africa as an intensified version of the mining operations of Western multinationals, particularly with respect to the business-friendly arrangements contained in their bilateral investment treaties with Africa109. In the beginning, commentators on the left, including Walden Bello, Horace Campbell and Radhika Desai, expressed the hope that the BRICS’ new financial institutions would break Bretton Woods’ grip110. Yet, their arguments did not take into account contradictions in the financing of destructive African energy and infrastructure projects, or the maintenance of the dollar-centered Western monetary system, or the extremely inadequate policies on change, in which the BRICS are involved. The 100 billion USD BRICS Reserve Fund, for example, requires that one of the five member countries in financial difficulty (as South Africa is likely to be when its shorter payments become unsustainable) ask the IMF for a structural adjustment loan and policy support, once they have exhausted 30% of their borrowing quota, thus amplifying the IMF’s leverage effect111. And the 2015 round of IMF shareholder restructuring resulted in substantial increases in vote for China (37%), Brazil (23%), India (11%) and Russia (8%). To achieve this, however, it took seven (7) African countries to lose more than 1/5 of their voting shares with the IMF : Nigeria (41%), Libya (39%), Morocco (27%), Gabon (26%), Algeria (26%), Namibia (26%) and even South Africa (21 %).

5. Africa in world trade: rejecting marginalization and broadening policy space for development

The place of Africa in the multilateral trading system has often been the subject of particular attention, although in most cases this attention has focused instead on the contextual or factual analysis of the weakness of the contribution from this continent to world trade, or the uncertainties attached to the participation of African states in trade negotiations112.

1. A continent that “has come from afar”

The place of Africa has often been reduced in the world trading system to a simple statistical indicator: less than 2% of world trade. The analyses that underlie the thesis on the low level of participation of African countries in world trade are, for the most part, based on a quantitative approach. However, such a statistic approach hides the deep and decisive dynamics of change, as well as the progress made by African countries, both in trade and in trade negotiations, be they multilateral, regional or bilateral, in a global context that does not present only advantages.

In fact, Africa suffers less from an integration deficit than from a bad integration into world trade. Almost all African countries are members of the WTO. Almost all of them have largely liberalized and consolidate their customs tariffs, while many of them, as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), are under no obligation to do so. Finally, all African countries and regional economic communities are simultaneously engaged in a series of multilateral, regional and bilateral negotiations aimed at further opening them to the global market.

With 44 members out of the 164 members of the WTO, Africa represents more than a quarter of the actors in this institution. Who can, therefore, really challenge the opening of Africa to the world market?

108 Patrick Bond, 2016, «BRICS Banking and the Debate on Sub-Imperialism», Third World Quarterly, 37, 4, April

66
What is at stake is rather its ability to take advantage of the opportunities offered by being open to world trade, while minimizing the consubstantial negative effects of liberalization. Africa’s inability to benefit from trade is explained by the fact that it joined world trade from a subordinate position, with low added value and wealth. Its status is that of a supplier of commodities and raw materials in very limited amounts, which confines it to the bottom of the global value chains.

Moreover, because of the hasty liberalization policies that African countries experienced in the past, their efforts to industrialize, recover and transform raw materials and diversify have been thwarted, or destroyed, by the sudden and brutal competition by imported products. The reduction of their political space, as well as the loss of sovereignty and control over their own economic and trade policy instruments born in this period, still continue to cripple many countries.

Consequently, to say that Africa is not doing enough to integrate into world trade is unfair. From 1995 to the present day, trade has become an important issue for almost all African states, and its potential for economic growth and the fight against poverty is recognized by all, including the private sector and civil society.

From the very first year of existence of the WTO, a group of four countries made up of Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco and Senegal set up the African Group. As Africa is a «legal fiction» within the trading system, lacking a legal existence comparable to that of the EU, for example, the precursors of the African Group have not seen it fit to endow it with a founding act which would give it a formal character.

This group has thus remained in this informal status until today, merely facilitating the coordination of the positions of African countries and their harmonization with those of other groups. Today, nearly three-quarters of the activity of diplomatic missions of African countries in Geneva is devoted to multilateral trade negotiations. This is proof of the interest that African countries are giving to these negotiations, despite the scarcity of their resources.

On the African continent, the trade agenda is also marked by a series of new initiatives all aimed at strengthening integration and economic development, by promoting free trade among African states. It is enough to mention the ZLEC in the making, the tripartite free trade zone in East Africa, or the establishment of the Customs Union of West Africa.

2. Shattered dreams … development to be found nowhere

Launched in 2001, with the aim of correcting the imbalances and imperfections of the trade agreements that emerged from the 1986-93 Uruguay Round negotiations, the Doha Round had meant a big hope for developing countries. By committing itself to rebuilding the normative compromise that underpinned the economic and trade relations between North and South, Doha was to deliver a new product that enshrined the centrality of development in international trade negotiations. In Doha, all African countries had helped build the dream of an open, transparent, equitable, non-discriminatory and regulated trading and financial system.

Nowadays, one realizes that the declarations of good intentions did not survive the clash of national conflicting interests and the power of the influence of financial lobbies, among others. The multilateral trading system failed to produce inclusive and equitable governance. It consciously established governance that was exclusive and unequal. It is indeed symptomatic that no African country has ever been able to complain to WTO arbitrators.

However, grievances are not lacking. The example of the cotton issue raised by African countries in 2003 without success is the most emblematic case. For less than what African countries had suffered, Brazil seized the DSB against the United States and won the case. Africans, who could only opt for negotiation, still (continue today to) demand an «ambitious, rapid and specific treatment» of the cotton issue. It is unlikely that their request will be successful.

Significantly enough, the theme of development, which is finding it hard to be taken on board, is gradually fading away from the challenges of rising economies, justifying the shift in attention from developing countries to rising countries. Conscious of their strengths, the latter are now throwing all their weight behind the multilateral trading system, to bend it in the direction of their own interests and to offset the traditional control, by developed countries, of the system. This, among other things, has driven the WTO to the brink of the abyss in recent years.

Angered by the WTO impasse, which they have largely contributed to creating, these same developed countries signed regional, multi-lateral or mega-regional trade agreements to circumvent the multilateral trading system and establish new rules that they tried to impose, later on, as universal principles. They gave the WTO only the bare minimum to keep it alive and to continue to enjoy the benefits that the current status
6. Uncompensated depletion of natural capital

Funding mechanisms that create dependencies and the pursuit of FDI mainly targeting the mining industry are responsible for the excessively rapid and poorly compensated for depletion of non-renewable resources in Africa. This depletion occurs in Africa without the more frequent types of reinvestment in sites such as in Norway, Australia and Canada, whose economies are also resource-based, but not as much as in Africa; in large part, because they house the headquarters of transnational mining and oil companies. Many BRICS companies seem too eager to continue this rapid depletion of Africa’s «natural capital», as economists call natural resources. Although the end of the super-cycle of commodities translates into a lower rate of extraction, measured in terms of world prices, this should not prevent Africans from seeing a persistent colonial bias towards the decline of minerals, oil and gas, the exploitation of which makes Africa poorer than elsewhere.

This prejudice about declining non-renewable resources without reinvestment has resulted in a rapid decline in the net wealth of the continent since 2001. Even the World Bank admits that 88% of sub-Saharan African countries have suffered from a net accumulation of negative wealth in 2010.

In absolute terms, the Bank also recognizes that this depletion of wealth represented 12% of the 1.36 trillion USD GDP of the subcontinent in 2010, or 163 billion USD (and much more if the major oil-rich countries of North Africa are included).

Estimates of Africa’s declining wealth should be part of the «all for mining» philosophy, to argue that, as long as countries are not in possession of their own resources, minerals and oil should remain in the soil. (For example, local activists who criticize the exploitation of diamonds in eastern Zimbabwe, oil in Nigeria, and coal, platinum and titanium in South Africa, regularly say that resources must “remain under the ground”). For oil, the compensations that must be paid by the countries of the North - as a down payment on the «ecological debt» owed to Africa - simply for reasons of mitigation of climate change, would be substantial.

7. Land-grabbing, climate change and militarization

Today, the African economy and environment are characterized by three destructive phenomena: land-grabbing, militarization and climate change. The most immediate threats are to the African peasantry, in particular women, especially those in areas that are attractive to foreign investors. Small farmers in Ethiopia, Mozambique and elsewhere, are displaced by land grabbing by farmers from in the Middle East, India, South Africa and China. The growing role of the US military in dozens of African countries testifies to Washington’s simultaneous desire to be in control of the situation, against the backdrop of growing Islamic fundamentalism, from the Sahel to Kenya, which are, as if by chance, scenes of war close to large oil reserves.

Climate change is affecting the most vulnerable Africans in the poorest countries, who are already suffering from war and displacement in West Africa, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa. At the same time, the continued application of neoliberal public policy narrowing the scope of States can only generate more social tension, as was the case in Syria before the 2011 uprising, following extreme drought which amplified the trends of urbanization.

A new ideology

An old issue remains. Indeed, Frantz Fanon complained in «Toward the African Revolution» that «the deeper I enter into cultures and political circles, the more I am sure that the great danger that threatens Africa is the absence of any ideology». In «The Weapon of Theory», Amilcar Cabral says: «The ideological gap within national liberation movements, not to say the total lack of ideology - reflecting something like an ignorance of the historical reality that these movements claim to transform – threatens to be one of the greatest weaknesses of our struggle against imperialism, if not the greatest weakness». Samir Amin and other radical political economists have argued for an ideology and economic strategy of «disconnection» since the 1960s. Reversing the «Rising Africa» project through ongoing popular uprisings in Africa is the main challenge for those who oppose economic injustice. For example, the fight for AIDS drugs, which cost 10,000 USD per person per year, but are now

114 Thomas Ferrando, 2014, BRICS, BITs and Land Grabbing, Paris, Faculty of Law and Political Science
provided free of charge on a generic basis, was won in the early 2000s, thanks to African and international militancy, and has increased life expectancy by more than ten years.

Following the North African uprisings of 2011, which were put down by the counter-revolution (except partially in Tunisia), many rebellions were noted across the continent. The fighting spirit is still there. In 2016, for example, the continent witnessed even more intense demonstrations in North Africa, Nigeria and South Africa. In addition, Southern Africa experienced high levels of resistance in Harare, Kinshasa and Goma, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in Zambia and Madagascar, where capital cities, Lusaka and Antananarivo, experienced more uprising compared to 2011. East Africa and the Horn of Africa witnessed numerous demonstrations in Nairobi, Kampala, Bujumbura, Khartoum and Addis Ababa, and around neighboring cities. West African demonstrations were led by Nigerians, but there were many other hot spots in the Gulf of Guinea. 2016 saw new waves of protests in North Africa, most of them in the main sites of 2011: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Algeria. State repression intensified in many countries in response to renewed demonstrations.

The African Development Bank, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development also evaluated the events with data based on Reuters and Agence France Presse reports and, in 2017, noted that higher salaries and better working conditions were among the main demands in recent years. Much of the turmoil in Africa before the 2011 upsurge took place near mineral wealth sites. At this critical juncture, as the outcome of the commodity super cycle now makes clear the need for change, it is clear, at least, that Africans do not always let themselves be pushed around.

But Africa’s resilience is, to a large extent, a result of political and monetary sovereignty, as well as self-centered development, that help supervise farming innovations and industrialization.

The popular sovereignty project: the alternative to liberal globalization

The interdependence of social struggles in various countries of the world therefore depends on how

the different dominant blocs exploit the possibilities they have on the international scene. The conclusion of global alliances by the ruled, capable of creating a «best global alternative», is therefore critical.

The support or rejection of national sovereignty will be the subject of serious misunderstanding as long as the class content of the strategy they are a part of is not grasped. The dominant social bloc in capitalist societies always sees national sovereignty as tool to promote its own interests, namely the capitalist exploitation of domestic labor and, simultaneously, the consolidation of its positions in the world system. Today, in the context of a globalized liberalized system, dominated by the financialized monopolies of the «triad» (United States, Europe, Japan), national sovereignty is the tool allowing the ruling classes to maintain their competitive positions within the system. The United States Government offers the clearest example of this permanent practice: sovereignty is conceived of as the exclusive domain of US monopolistic capital, and for this purpose, primacy is given to the national law of the United States over international law. In the past, it was also the practice of the European imperialist powers, and the major European states continue to do so inside the European Union122.

It is understandable then why national views, praising the virtues of sovereignty while hiding the class interests it serves, have always been unacceptable to all those who defend working classes. Yet, we should not reduce the defense of sovereignty to this modality, that of bourgeois nationalism. This defense is no less decisive for the protection of a popular alternative on the long road to socialism. It is even an essential condition for progress in this direction.

The reason is that the world order (as well as its European sub-order) will never be transformed «from above» by collective decisions of the ruling classes. Progress in this regard is always the result of uneven progress in struggles from one country to another. The transformation of the world system (or of the European subsystem) is the product of the changes that are necessary within (the framework of) the various States, the latter modifying in their turn the international balance of power between them. The national State remains, for the moment, an inevitable setting, where decisive struggles are taking place which, in the end, transform the world.

The peoples in the peripheries of this system which is polarized by nature have a long experience of this positive and progressive nationalism, and which is anti-imperialist, which rejects the world order imposed by the centers, and is therefore potentially anti-capitalist. This, since this nationalism may also carry the illusion of being able to build a national capitalism; which is able to «catch up» with the national constructions of the dominant centers. Nationalism on the peripheries is progressive only on this condition, to remain anti-imperialist, that is to say, today, to confront the globalized liberal order. Any other nationalism accepting the liberal world order (and remaining only apparent) is only the tool of local ruling classes eager to participate in the exploitation of their people and, ultimately, other weaker partners, by acting as sub-imperialist powers.

1. The choice of a self-centered development is inevitable

Self-reliant development (or «endogenous development») has always been a specific feature of the process of capital accumulation in capitalist centers. It determined the modes of their economic development, which was mainly driven by the dynamics of internal social relations, and reinforced by external relations at their service. On the peripheries, on the other hand, the process of capital accumulation is mainly derived from the evolution of the centers, so its «dependence» is reinforced by that.

The dynamic model of self-reliant development rests on one main lever: the one through which operates the close interdependence between growth of the production of goods for production and growth of the production of goods for mass consumption. This articulation reflects the conflicting social relationship between the two fundamental blocks of the system: the national bourgeoisie and workers. Self-reliant economies are not closed. On the contrary, they are outright open, in that they shape the global system as a whole, depending on their ability to intervene politically and economically on the world stage. In counterpoint, the dynamics of peripheral capitalism – as opposed to central capitalism, self-reliant by definition – is based on another main lever, that which combines export capacity, on the one hand, and consumption - imported or locally produced – by a minority, on the other hand. This model defines the comprador nature - as opposed to national - of the peripheral bourgeoisies.

Two divergent tendencies flow from this opposition: one operating in favor of the integration of the nations

122 Samir Amin, 2012, The implosion of contemporary capitalism, Paris, Delga Publishing. In chapter 4, the author discusses the specific question of Europe.
in the center, where centripetal forces dominate self-reliant accumulation; the other, producing the disintegration of the nations on the peripheries, where this threat is permanently exerted by centrifugal forces which depend on accumulation exerts. Imperialist policies encourage these tendencies with arrogance and cynicism, taking as an excuse and pretense the «right of interference», «humanitarian» interventions and, in an excessive way, the right to «self-determination».

Sovereignty is one of many useful social science instruments by which a development approach can be based on political economy. As it is understood today, sovereignty is a convenient concept and encompasses both emancipatory (the right to development) and oppressive (Washington Consensus) dimensions, as well as sophisticated and down-to-earth matters. While acknowledging its limits, one must say that there is a serious questioning of the concept, and there will inevitably be more; suffice it to say that it is operational for the current project.

At present, the particular use of the concept of sovereignty is in reference to teleology towards a nationally financed development, or more specifically, self-reliant development (SRD). In other words, developing countries should be allowed to pursue their development goals. SRD refers to mainly national development; addressing national issues, including the farming (currently, there is neither a real prospect of massive emigration and colonization, nor urban migration likely to enhance the status of the rural populations). In general, development can be understood as a focus on the general increase in the living standards of the majority of people in one given country, or «ensuring social progress for the vast majority of the working classes and reducing inequalities.» Particularly dear to the SRD is the concept of disconnection, knowing that national development cannot take place with current levels of openness, apart from the historical fact that industrialization still tends to entail a form of protectionism (disconnection) in the years of preparation for the development of an industrial system.

At this level, industrialization is the most important point. But it is only an industrial system, in contrast to the creation of industries, which is quite the opposite of what is usually planned as part of a nationally funded development. More specifically, the term «industrial system» means «to build an integrated and comprehensive (industrial) production system that implies that each industry is designed to become a significant supplier of inputs and/or an important outlet for other industries.»

We need to cast our net further, as part of this study, and say that sovereignty is one of many exploratory narratives, and complements other approaches. On the basis of a certain consensus, including on sovereignty, it is considered possible to build a «common front» (or movement) to achieve SRD.

2. Monetary sovereignty, key to the SRD

The SRD concept in relation to monetary sovereignty is understood as «involving state intervention» that is, state planning, the management of an independent national financial system in order to prioritize funding for the construction of industries, in the context of budgetary constraints, to avoid inflation and the growth of external debt. Taxation systems should be designed to support the development of this project. Ultimately, foreign direct investment should be used to negotiate conditions that strengthen the national project. Protectionism (or disconnection) is no panacea for self-reliance, but an essential step in the pursuit of SRD. To set up an effective domestic financial system, capable of limiting inflation and the growth of external debt, is no small feat, in particular for African countries, as history and current statistics show. It also provides for a central role for the State as a last resort employer, seeking high quality products, etc. The mandate of the State is designed to ensure that public and private actions contribute to improving the living conditions of the majority of the populations.

Monetary sovereignty is necessary for a national financial system geared towards SRD. Monetary sovereignty usually refers to the monopoly of a sovereign state over the creation and elimination of its currency. There is, however, a legal dimension, such as membership of the International Monetary Fund and the recognition by international law of these sovereign rights, as well as a factual dimension, whereas one State, in relation to others, has renounced its sovereignty, or sees limits imposed on it through the institutional organization that governs these monetary arrangements. This issue is further treated under the «capital mobility hypothesis» heading.

123 Samir Amin (2017) states that “A national sovereign project involves the design and implementation of a coherent set of national policies aimed at” walking on two legs “: 1) building an integrated industrial production system and autocentered; 2) to move towards policies of revival and modernization of peasant agriculture; and 3) articulate these two goals into a coherent and comprehensive plan of action.”


125 The extent of the role of the state, or the companies over which it has effective control, is a subject of debate, and many successful countries have active state mechanisms.
Today, the focus is primarily on the factual dimensions of monetary sovereignty, and some of the important considerations that must be kept in mind as part of a SRD sovereign project.

This analysis is brought to a lower level of abstraction than more holistic, systemic (or more impressive) analyses. However, it is about the same thing and is also, and more, concerned with what actually «is» or what «ought to be ». The approach is simple, as it seeks to ensure that finance is socially useful, as opposed to socially dangerous.

The incredible poverty of the majority of Africans demands a full understanding of what «is» and a broad consensus on what «should be», as well as the trajectory between the two. The recent financial sanctions imposed by the United States on Venezuela, Iran and Russia remind us of the importance of the matter. Monetary sovereignty is not a front to leave unattended. Forces outside the nation have a significant influence. Even in countries like Ecuador, where the power of the people has taken over, the fact of not having one's own national currency cannot be ruled out. This institutional arrangement in itself has proven to be limiting in achieving the aspirations of the people (Weisbrot, 2017).

In social sciences, the problems of heterogeneity and the difficulties of the particular in relation to the general or the universal present their own methodological challenges. This is treated in a certain way, in order to avoid endless debates, without ignoring these. The idea here is to develop a methodology concerning the relevant categories and concepts applicable to each African state; a categorization system to unravel what is common (of which there is a lot) and what is special (which can withstand generalization), in harmony with the purpose of SRD. This is based on the recognition that there is an obligation to “run with the hare and hunt with hounds”.

Monetary sovereignty is essentially concerned with the right to self-determination. The economic manifestation of self-determination is SRD. But there can only be limited self-determination, without monetary sovereignty. This complex of ideas, self-determination, national development and monetary sovereignty, must be extended to basic movements, in addition to deepening the analysis.

Environmental concerns about the destructive effects of consumption and production patterns, as well as religious prohibitions on usury, and the morality of debt forgiveness, provide a good opportunity to surely reintroduce these concepts into society.

More generally, the underlying issue is how to base a new social contract on another set of values.

**Building a long-term project for an African Renaissance**

A word is needed on the debate on «Africa Rising». It is not so much victory that counts, but that let what should be done be done. It is a long-term project, and it must be recognized here that we cannot evade humble and contradictory beginnings. The meteoric rise of China is a recent case of success for its project of sovereignty in a multi-polar globalization. Even if its capacity to be duplicated in the African context remains limited, Africans should compete!

126 Social reality is understood here as processual, the creative process in reality to obtain an objective, which is an intrinsic part of transformation, or the true “becoming”. It concerns the starting points of a popular/national movement for a DCA, which is a long transition process.


**Given the demographic challenge and technological change, does employment with decent salaries have a future in Africa?**

One of the aims of this study is to contribute to significantly improving the well-being of our fellow citizens. How can we, in practice, make this noble mission possible? The usual answer is that, increasing the rate of economic growth will, in the long run, reduce or even eradicate poverty. The underlying assumption is that economic growth will generate productive jobs that will help share out more and more purchasing power to a growing number of workers. This central position given to job creation is not fortuitous. In today's world, employment plays three main roles: it is the main means of distribution of purchasing power; it is the main way to access social citizenship; it is also a special mechanism for social integration.

To significantly improve the well-being of our fellow citizens, our governments pin their hopes on a massive creation of decent jobs which accelerated economic growth is supposed to entail.
This argument implicitly assumes that African countries can successfully replicate the development trajectories observed in the West.

In a forward-looking approach, we here defend the idea that the mode of redistribution of social wealth via decent employment - which we call the «Fordist paradigm» - is not what Africa needs in the 21st century. More precisely, our belief is that decent salaried employment has no future in Africa, and that it is a completely anachronistic strategy in the 21st century to want to make the well-being of Africans depend on the idea of economic growth capable, if not of generating decent full employment, at least of making decent employment the rule. The creation of jobs to distribute purchasing power is an issue of the second half of the twentieth century. During the 21st century, the major problem in Africa will be how to redistribute social wealth other than through employment. On what bases can a new social contract be no longer based on employment in a society that cannot offer full employment? Far from the prophecies of Jérémy Rifkin who postulates the end of employment, we consider that it is more a new rationalization of employment one which is at work, with all that such a process can induce in terms of innovation, but also in terms of violence and contradiction (Ndiaye and Ferreira, 2013)128.

In order to prevent potential misunderstandings, we’ll stress at the outset that our approach cannot be described as «pessimistic». We start from the observation of heavy trends, to derive implications for the possibilities that will be offered to the continent during this century. Nor should any approach be taken to fall with neo-Malthusian, or even eco-fascist, analysts; that is to say, analyses according to which demographic growth in Africa would be a threat to our planet, and that, therefore, all necessary measures, including authoritarian measures, should be taken to stop it (Engdahl, 2009, p. 78-79)129. We do not believe that population growth is a problem in the absolute.

The problem lies rather in the association of population growth with capitalism, a global system of production and distribution based on polarization that favors a minority at the expense of a vast majority. Our belief is that the downward trend in the socially necessary labor time to produce goods and services can be a source of human liberation, provided that the appropriate political choices are made.

If there is one area where Africa has made rapid progress in the last twenty years, it is in the area of information technology (IT). Indeed, the continent has about 850 million mobile users, 200 million Internet users and 120 million people registered on Facebook. This technological boom is changing the way Africans conduct their businesses, facilitating access to the market and information130.

This evolution varies according to the sub-sectors (computers, telecommunication and audio-visual). The telecommunications sub-sectors greatly dominates and one wonders if IT still reduces African to a status of passive consumers, interested in many gadgets noted for their scheduled obsolescence, and often for their uselessness.

1. Employment in Africa

As an introduction to the discussion that follows, it is useful to briefly recall some of the structural features of employment in Africa (Sylla, 2013)131.

One first structural characteristic is the way the work force is poorly absorbed. This waste of human resources is a symptom of the underdevelopment of productive forces, and of a dysfunctional economic organization. It shows itself in the form of open and involuntary unemployment, something that affects urban people, particularly middle-class youths and graduates.


129 Demographic change in Africa is being watched with concern by the Pentagon, because of the tension it would impose on the continent's natural resources. According to some authors, controlling the demography of African countries rich in natural resources is one of the reasons for the creation of AFRICOM, one of its missions being to block China's access to these natural resources. For further developments, see Engdahl F.W., 2009, Full Spectrum Dominance. Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order, Progressive

130 In Kenya, for example, the amount of money transferred by telephone accounts for about half of GDP.

131 From a statistical point of view, the concept of "employment" refers to any economic activity of at least one hour (of time) during a given reference period, according to the ILO. Such an elastic definition allows (i) to encompass under the same concept all employment situations, whatever their duration or frequency, (ii) to give priority to employment over unemployment, which is then defined as a situation of absence of employment (zero hour during the reference period); and (iii) to measure the amount of work needed for production in accordance with the United Nations system of national accounting. In its statistical sense, the concept of employment does not distinguish between high quality jobs (or decent jobs) and so-called "vulnerable", "precarious", "atypical", jobs. As we will see here, it is essential to include this qualitative aspect when talking about employment in developing countries. On these points, see Nongo S. Sylla, 2013, "Measuring Difficulties in Labor Force Absorption in Developing Countries: The Limits of the Unemployment Rate Concept" International Labor Review, vol. 152 n° 1.
However, since the vast majority of workers cannot afford not to be employed, in particular in the absence of social safety nets, it follows that open unemployment, although an important fact, is not the most significant expression of this waste of human resources. In its various manifestations (inadequate time-tables, indecent earnings), underemployment, is the usual condition of the overwhelming majority of African workers in hardly productive jobs, in the farming and informal sectors. Decent salaried employment, which provides decent income and meaningful social protection, is the exception rather than the rule.

Salaried employment is not usually the dominant status in terms of employment relationships. Rather, it is about «self-employed workers», including in urban areas.

One second structural feature is that employment growth has been fueled mainly - often to more than 90% - by informal jobs (those in the informal sector, more than those in the modern sector) over the last four decades. The renewed economic growth recorded since the early 2000s has not led to a massive creation of decent jobs at continent level. This reality, usually expressed as jobless growth, implies that economic growth mostly creates informal jobs in mass (Economic Commission for Africa and African Union, 2010)\(^\text{132}\).

Finally, one third important structural feature: because of its high population growth, Africa is nowadays the region where the increase in the labor force is the fastest. This trend will become more pronounced during this century.

2. Brief overview of demographic trends

The population of the African continent was estimated at 1.18 billion in 2015, is expected to reach (according to the median scenario of the United Nations) 1.68 billion in 2030; 2.5 billion in 2050, and 4.4 billion in 2100. In other words Africa will represent 20% of the world’s population in 2030, 25% in 2050, and 39% by 2100.

Between 2015 and 2050, the world’s population will increase by 2.4 billion. More than half, that is, 1.3 billion people, will go to Africa. Between 2050 and 2100, Africa will lead world population growth (128%).

North America and Oceania will record a slight population growth. The other regions - Asia, Europe, and Latin America - will see their populations decrease in absolute terms.

By 2100, Nigeria will have the third largest population in the world, with 752 million inhabitants, behind India and China. It will be followed by other African countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo (389 million, fifth place), Tanzania (299 million, 8th place), Ethiopia (243 million, 9th place), Niger (209 million, 10th place) and Uganda (203 million, 11th place).

Currently, the working population (aged 15-64) in sub-Saharan Africa is growing every year from 17.5 to 18 million. By 2030, the number of new people on the labor market will be around 27 million. In general, the potential working population is expected to double, or even triple, in 41 sub-Saharan African countries, between 2010 and 2050, to reach 1.25 billion (United Nations 2015, IMF 2015, Beaujeu et al., 2011).

In the face of these demographic trends, the question is: will it be possible to absorb this growing workforce into decent jobs? Or, in other words, is decent full employment a realistic aspiration?

To answer this question, it may be useful to ponder the experience of India and China, two countries that have been - and still are - facing significant demographic pressure and have achieved spectacular economic results over the last four decades. The purpose of such an exercise is not, of course, to compare these two countries with a continent of 54 countries, with its diversities and peculiarities. It is more about seeing what we can learn from the two largest demographic powers in today’s world, from the point of view of the absorption of the workforce.

3. What do India and China tell us?

Between 1970 and 2014 India’s GDP per capita was multiplied by 10. Has this economic growth enabled a massive creation of decent jobs? Or, at least, has it allowed decent employment growth above that of the labor force?

Every year, 15 million Indians enter the labor market (Center for Equity Studies, 2014, p. 111). Although high in absolute terms, this figure is relatively low as...
it corresponds to an activity rate of 56%, well below those generally observed in developing countries. It results essentially from the low employment activity rate of women, which is around 31% (Sharma, 2013, p. 3)\(^{136}\). It is likely that the apparently low female participation rate in India results from the fact that women are more often involved in «invisible» employment, usually outside statistical measures.

Over the last four decades, job creation has been relatively low in relation to the growth of the labor force. The sectors that generally creating jobs have been weak. Agriculture is always the first employer. It employs one in two workers, nationally, and two out of three workers in rural areas. Manufacturing and services occupy a still low share of employment, respectively 13% and 27% (Sharma, 2013, p. 3).

The paradox is that the 1994-2010 period, when economic growth accelerated, generated far fewer jobs than during the previous two decades, when economic growth was much smaller. As in Africa, we find in India the phenomenon of “jobless growth”.

As a result, the jobs created were largely informal. The industrialization of India has not put an end to informal jobs. It has rather accompanied their development.

As for manufacturing, the informal sector contributes 20% of GDP and 80% of employment, and accounts for 99% of institutions (Ghani et al., 2015)\(^{137}\). The bad news is that the modern sector has not been spared by the trend towards making employment informal, since more than half of employment is informal there. In all sectors, one worker out of two is «self-employed». Worse, 92% of Indian workers, of a population of 400 million, more than that of the United States, do not have access to meaningful social protection (Papola et Sahu, 2012\(^{138}\); Center for Equity Studies, 2014; Sharma, 2013).

Finally, it should be noted that youth unemployment remains one concern; in particular, among graduates who represent 30% of the total unemployed (Sharma, 2013). Even though the open unemployment rate is generally low, in 2012 an estimated 17 million unemployed people were looking for a job.

If we include the working poor, people permanently underemployed and new job seekers, we reach a total of 94 million people (Papola and Sahu, 2012: 49).

In summary, after forty years of sustained economic growth and real progress in industrialization, less than 10% of the employed populations have a decent job in India.

As far as China is concerned, it is a country whose experience is unique, considering the adoption of the one-child policy in the late 1970s, which is reported to have helped prevent the birth of 400 million Chinese, if we are to believe Chinese authorities\(^{139}\). China is currently facing the challenges posed by this contraceptive policy that has been pursued for nearly four decades. These include an aging population, a declining workforce, and the emergence of a «labor shortage» in some sectors.

China’s GDP per capita grew at an average annual rate of 9% between 1970 and 2014. In other words, it increased 44 times, over this period. These remarkable economic performances drastically boasted job creation. Urban employment doubled in the last two decades, to reach 393 million in 2014, when it outpaced rural employment (Lam et al., 2015)\(^{140}\). In sector-based terms, agriculture accounted for 34% of employment in 2012, compared with 30% for industry and 36% for services. (Majid, 2015, p. 46)\(^{141}\).

Unlike most developing countries, urban informal employment apparently remained low in China until the mid-2000s, due to the control of migratory movements from rural areas. According to some estimates, which must be taken with caution in view of the scarcity and quality of data available, 60% of jobs in industry and services in 2012-2013 were informal (Schucher, 2014, p. 32; Liang et al., 2016; Zhou, 2016).
Youths’ unemployment is particularly problematic, especially for graduates. 15 million of the 20 million job-seekers are urban (non-migrant) graduates. The Chinese government is also fearful of the threat of a «Chinese renaissance», fueled by the discontent among unemployed graduates (Schucher, 2014: 20). Indeed, according to some estimates, still to be taken with caution, the number of unemployed people increased from 5.7 million to 21.6 million, between 1990 and 2011 (Majid, 2015, p. 15).

What can we learnt from the experiences of India and China? These are two powers that continue to face less demographic pressure than Africa in the 21st century. They have each tried to reduce the increase in the size of their working populations - the first, via a discriminatory withdrawal of women from the labor market; the second, through a drastic contraceptive policy. Although they have recorded significant economic growth rates over the last four decades, they have not been able to absorb most of their workforce in decent jobs.

The point about India and China can be generalized: informal employment is nowadays the situation experienced by the majority of workers all over the world, in particular those of the countries of the South. After five hundred years of capitalism, it is estimated globally that 80% of working-age people (and their families) do not have access to an adequate system of social protection (ILO, 2010, p. 33)\(^{145}\).

This means that the model of regular and decent salaried employment is a historical exception. Strictly speaking, it is the form of employment which should be called «atypical».

4. **With the threat of technological unemployment, where to find millions of decent jobs?**

Given the highly improbability of achieving full decent employment, some may still argue that Africa, a continent with a large reservoir of natural resources, has the potential to create decent jobs, at a pace compatible with the evolution of its workforce. This argument is questionable from two points of view. First, it is based on the idea that we can create unlimited jobs, which is a way of echoing once more the myth of unlimited economic growth, an absurd belief that political ecology has easily shattered.

This idea also refers to the mythical dualistic model which, finally, is confined to explaining, not the process of industrialization, but the formation of the informal sector in urban areas. Besides, with the idea of a «rational» civilization - not based on waste (which is the case of capitalism), the goal should not be to create jobs with the sole purpose of creating jobs, but rather to meet all social needs in the most economic way possible. Therefore, some forms of employment should not exist, or should be discouraged, because of their harmfulness or irrationality. The important question would no longer be «are we able to create jobs?» but rather «are we able to meet all social needs with the minimum of waste?».

Secondly, the argument of the significant potential for decent job creation does not take into account the impact, in terms of net job destruction, of the recent wave of technological innovations.

Recent technological innovations have the effect of making human work less and less necessary in the creation of social wealth. This will depend more and more on scientific and technical progress. Anthropologist Paul Jorion146 (2014) speaks of «decline in the employment rate».

The implication of this law is clear: the generalization, on a world scale, of the logic of «technological unemployment» that Keynes (1930) defined thus: «unemployment due to the discovery of means of saving labor that exceeds the pace at which we can find new jobs for the work force»147.

Randall Collins (2014) gives the following definition: «Technological unemployment is the mechanism by which innovations in equipment and work organization can save labor: produce more at a lower price and with fewer workers». According to Ford (2015), Randall Collins predicts the collapse of capitalist logic in the middle of the 21st century, due to the inability of capitalism to deal with widespread technological unemployment. The socioeconomic problems associated with technological unemployment include the growth of inequalities, the destruction of the economic foundation of the middle classes, and the difficulty in finding outlets for products put on the market by companies.148

Technological changes in progress follow two main logics: (i) to obtain more flexibility - to constantly adjust the production process to new needs and designs, and (ii) to reduce the share of salaries in added value. They save on both unskilled and skilled labor. The more specialized a job is, the more predictable it is, and the more likely it is to be automated, robotized and computerized. Jobs as skilled as radiologists’ are threatened. Virtually anything that is not really creative is likely to be replaced by machines or algorithms. In the United States, a study by two researchers from Oxford University (Frey and Osborne, 2013) estimates that 47% of the US workforce hold jobs that will eventually be replaced by computers149. A figure deemed conservative by some...

The negative impact in terms of job creation, of contemporary technological developments is not a threat accepted by all economists. Based on a particular interpretation of the first industrial revolution, some people tend to think that scientific and technological progress will create new jobs in quantities at least equivalent to the amount of jobs it destroys. But comparisons are misleading. There are two fundamental differences between the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century and the current wave of technological innovations.

The first depends on the context. The first industrial revolution was not able, in itself, to rid Europe of its labor surplus of the time. The changes it brought about to productive processes made a large segment of workers engaged in small production unemployed.

Mass migration to the Americas was the main means for Europe to significantly reduce the labor surplus induced by the industrial revolution. This is a point on which people do not usually insist enough (Patnaik et Patnaik, 2017, p. 56-57)150. As yet, one of the main features of today’s globalization is that labor movements are very weak, in particular those operating along the North-South axis. The current emigration rates, to relocate 10% of the poor from countries of the South to countries of the North would take two hundred years! (Milanovic, 2012, p. 124)151 This difference in historical context also explains why the countries of the South cannot successfully replicate the model of development followed by Europe - the so-called «catching up


through imitation». For this, as pointed out by Samir Amin (2013, pp. 142-143), they would need five or six Americas152

The second major difference is that the impact of the current wave of technological innovations is not «sector-based», but cross-cutting. No economic sector is spared, not even services. This limits the potential for sector-based reallocation of the labor force affected by automation, “robotization” and computerization. In this context, one wonders where the millions of decent jobs aspired to by African youths can come from.

They will certainly not come from agriculture, notwithstanding the need in Africa, to defend the maintenance of small farming. Indeed, during the economic development process, farming is not intended to create jobs. It must rather destroy jobs in huge quantities. Surplus labor in the farming sector is expected to be allocated to the secondary sector and services. The difficulty is that, the manufacturing sector, a traditionally labor-intensive sector, does not create as many jobs as in the past.

This is called «early deindustrialization» by some economists like Dani Rodrik (2015)153. «Early deindustrialization», because it operates at a much lower income level than the level from which the process started in rich countries. It is also observed in newly industrialized countries.

If China has done better than India economically, it is, among other things, because it developed its industries more quickly. It created millions of jobs in the manufacturing sector. But trends are starting to be reversed.

China is experiencing this «early deindustrialization». 16 million jobs were destroyed in the Chinese manufacturing sector between 1995 and 2002, which represented 15% of its workforce. What is the reason? The automation and “robotization” of the manufacturing sector are the main explanations. Today, the international trade in robots is one of the most dynamic markets of the global economy, particularly in China (Ford, 2015, p.3, 10).

The accelerated automation of the manufacturing sector has resulted, among other things, in «reshoring», relocating or reversing relocation processes.


As robots are more «productive» than the lowest-paid worker on the planet, the need for offshoring driven by differences in unitary labor costs is less and less felt. Thus, with reshoring, countries like the United States will gain in competitiveness, but this resurgence will have a small impact on employment.

In this context, the issue of industrialization in the case of Africa, and that of countries not yet industrialized, arises in new terms. (UNCTAD, 2016)

First, like Southeast Asia, it is not certain that Africa can benefit from offshoring driven by differences in unit labor costs. Secondly, if Africa aspires to industrialize and export competitive products, it will also have to move towards automation, robotization and computerization; which means that an industrialized and competitive Africa will be an Africa with far fewer industrial jobs than expected.

Assuming that Africa’s economic development accelerates, via a prodigious increase in productivity gains, very few decent jobs will be created, given realities in the past, and the projected evolution of labor on the continent.

Consequently, the question is whether we will reduce the majority of Africans to occupying jobs that would be useless or superfluous in a better organized society, simply because we dare not imagine another mode of redistribution of productivity gains.

In «Ecologica, André Gorz (2008, p.120) wrote that «full-employment of the Fordist type cannot be reproduced by computerized post-Fordism.»

African leaders should ponder this pearl of wisdom and draw consequences from it. Africa certainly has enormous economic potential and a large margin in terms of economic progress to be made. Millions of decent jobs can be created in the near future, provided that the continent gives itself the means, and dares to develop local farming and its industry by relying mainly on the local processing of natural resources and raw materials.

But decent full employment is an illusion. No African government can create enough decent jobs for its youths. Ultimately, in a context where decent wage employment will be relatively scarce, an island in an ocean of informality, the priority will be, beyond the importance of slowing down population growth by non-authoritarian means (investment in education and strengthening of gender equality in particular), policies that disconnect access to (i) a decent income, (ii) meaningful social protection and (iii) funding opportunities for economic projects aimed at holding a formal salaried job. Putting in place a new distributive paradigm, this is the major challenge at the intersection of demographic change and contemporary technological change for 21st century Africa.

These two ongoing dynamics have the potential to contribute to the emergence of an affluent society, mainly noted for free products and services, sharing what we have got, and human liberation. For example, we often talk about encouraging the political participation of the working classes. This legitimate aspiration will remain wishful thinking, as long as the popular classes are not liberated significantly from the dictatorship of employment. Reduced working hours and economic security are prerequisites without which it is difficult to foresee real political participation by ordinary people. But to think like this is to articulate logics incompatible with the maintenance of capitalism, and the political and cultural institutions on which it rests. Hence the question of whether capitalism, if it has a future, is likely to create the future we want for young people today and tomorrow. Certainly not! Whatever the answer, a debate should at least be held within the AROA framework.

**Information technology in Africa : not to turn it into a new mirage**

Can Africa count on IT to bounce back, or will it remain an eternal consumer? What are the conditions for responsible and beneficial IT for Africa?

There are two viewpoints in the literature on IT for the development of Africa: one viewpoint that IT has a positive impact on African economies, and another that shows that a new economy, called “informal” regarding IT, has emerged (Chénéau-Loquay, 2008);

Can evidence support this viewpoint? Sylvestre Ouédraogo (2013) shows that any increase in ICT investment per worker contributes to improving average labor productivity in the economies of WAEMU countries..
Sagna, 2011^158; Ouédraogo, 2010^159). Studies in terms of resource allocation suggest that the telecommunications sector is raking in huge gains that do not stay on to refinance economies. Moreover, most of the works are left to the informal field, which reduces costs for operators, confining menial tasks to the informal economy (sale of charge cards, repair of mobile phones ... ).

According to UNCTAD (2017), the digital economy is evolving very fast, but at different speeds, depending on sectors and geographical areas. While 70% of people in developed countries buy their goods and services online, they are less than 2% in developing countries. Apart from a few projects and initiatives that have been shown to be IT success stories in Africa (M PESA in Kenya, Manobi in Senegal ...), the real changes brought about by IT are still to be found, despite the numerous competitions to innovation organized by international operators and organizations.

Some sectors of the value chain remain almost non-existent in Africa. This is the case of the manufacture of computers or mobile phones. Industries are limited to a few sets of phones (Tecno in Ethiopia) or tablets. Apart from a few largely advertised, with educational tablets made in Benin, Ivory Coast or Cameroon, African brands ready for use are yet to be found in computer shops.

A debate is going on between those who think that the popular IT economy is a step towards the digital industrialization of the continent, and those for whom the informal IT economy cannot lead to a real industry, being limited to basic services, and not to real networks or companies producing software and hardware.

Meanwhile, the itch for consumption is steadily increasing, without really debating the search for equipment adapted to the continent. The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project designed and set up in the United States, and presented with great fanfare at the 2013 world summit in Tunis on the information society, was a bitter failure (Larroqué, 2017^160).

The e-commerce or electronic banking solutions invented by young African developers and entrepreneurs are often quickly snapped up by operators; the former, being forced to use the platforms of the latter for their transactions, are victims of their digital carriers (example of INNOVAPAY, in Burkina, which went bankrupt, despite the fact that the population had adopted the simple and practical technology invented by the Burkinabe start-up). It took some operators to earn tens of millions of Euros with transfer operations outside Africa, before the BCEAO began to think of a real control strategy by prohibiting transfers to institutions issuing electronic money^161. Orange has gone on the offensive with Orange Bank.

The ictmedia.Africa website shows that, out of more than 400 million Euros of turnover that operators plan to achieve in 2018, half is expected from Africa and half from Europe, where Orange Bank will be launched in Spain and Belgium, in addition to France. A real debate is needed if we want an IT sector that impacts the development of the continent. The sensitive area of computer security would then be scrutinized in a context where the majority of the populations cannot read or write. Instead of operating within regional spaces to create real digital enclaves, every African country, dreams of its own Silicon Valley, a «science and technology park» having become a fashionable concept as part of a blind imitation.

People forget that, even in the United States, Silicon Valley was not born overnight, and it was a group of several American states that made this possible.

According to UNCTAD (2017), for developing countries to benefit from ITs, massive support is needed, which currently remains grossly inadequate. The share of IT in aid for trade declined from 3% in 2002-2005 to 1.2% in 2015.

It would be necessary to think of suitable equipment for the needs of the rural masses who have very limited access to electric energy, and to make interoperable and homogeneous the many solutions concerning farming market price platforms that abound on the continent.

Many innovations induced by the informal IT economy can therefore be transformed into real business projects, in regional spaces, to have a greater impact.


Measures, indicators, indices: what alternatives?

1. What are we talking about?

Economics defines the indicator as a variable whose values reflect a condition, a phenomenon. It’s a clue, a warning sign.

An “indication” is an observation, an announcement, a reference that allows one to know or recognize one thing, or to intervene and act on that thing. This thing, here, is called the well-being of the African populations. A social indicator can be considered a numerical measure that significantly expresses the past, present or future state of the multiple aspects of a social phenomenon, which is usually the subject of a purely revealing judgment. It may be thought that the social indicator is a statistical data with a directly normative meaning which, moreover, fits into a systematic set of measures relating to the condition of a society, measures that are obtained by classification, or by aggregation, or by the combined use of these two methods.

We can distinguish three measures of the concept of social indicator, according to whether it is from a knowledge, evaluation or intervention perspective. This leads to either trying to establish a knowledge tool through some measurement, or trying to measure, evaluate an intervention, through indicators. Each of these senses leads to a rationality, a definition, a use that is its own.

Some indicators seek to be informants, warning signs, by describing a situation or living conditions. Some others aim to be evaluators; in this case, they try to highlight the impact of an action (for example, the assessments of the achievements of municipal investments). Finally, there are pre-intervention indicators that provide a sort of inventory, in order to maximize the impact of the planned action; these are targeting indicators.

This required classification between the different kinds of indicators must not compromise the nature of their function. Indeed, the interpretation of a final situation in relation to an initial one entails an intertemporal comparison evaluating the means implemented, the expected results and those achieved. Whether indicators concern knowledge, that is to say measuring something, or action, that is to say measured, they take a look, decide on a given situation, with a view to its direct or indirect improvement.

The analysis of a situation is complete only if it looks ahead into the future. In this regard, an attempt to quantify well-being or progress in Africa adds a nuance to the conclusions of the debate on indicators. Some indicators, such as the measuring of progress, are versatile enough to simultaneously fulfill the function of knowledge, action and evaluation.

On the other hand, indicators sometimes take the role of indicators of means or equipment; sometimes that of results, objectives or impact, which may be interested in structures or operations. They can have a normative, descriptive or corrective character. Their legitimacy and objectivity depend on the more or less veiled ends pursued by their users. As a descriptive or appreciative instrument, they can take a variety of forms, depending on the needs: indicator of standard of living, level of development, lifestyle, individual or collective wellbeing, etc.

Generally, they only help decide on the degree of fulfillment of the major individual and/or collective needs. They depend on the use that is made of them: even if they are set up as «norms», indicators remain subordinate to the fundamental norm constituted by the overall political and economic project of a society. And that is what should be the focus of AROA’s attention.

The indicators are made up on the basis of an operational breakdown of socio-economic problems, and not of theoretical concepts analyzing society. In most cases, the approach is as follows:

- isolating discrete domains;
- identifying available statistical data, etc,
- organizing these data to derive an indicator from it.

Indicators designers tend not to question their conceptual framework. How do they manage to aggregate such diverse statistics - for example, the number of hospital beds and life expectancy - into a global indicator - in this case, a national health indicator; moreover, how do they manage to compare this syncretic information with another of the same nature, in different contexts? Measurement is not only a number, it has other properties: that of a social norm, that of an index of information on the structure of production, exchange, consumption of society, etc. Socio-economic information is only fully meaningful in its contextual framework.
All that conditions the activity of individuals and groups, or upholds this activity, is measurable, even if it cannot be expressed in monetary terms. There are several types of measures:

1. Nominal measure: for example the number of racehorses, of registration numbers. This measure allows no transformation, and serves only to identify;

2. Ordinal measure: expresses order, hierarchy, classification;

3. Interval measure: example of temperature scales. Through one type: \( y = ax + b \) transformation

4. Proportional measure or type \( ax \) transformation system.

This classification calls for some remarks: the first lies in the delicate determination of the weighting system. Indeed, the indicator that is a synthetic data must, in its calculations, take into account the proportionality of each element. Weighting is the process by which aggregation is justified. It gives information on the composition of the indicator, and at what level each element contributes to the whole. Thus, it helps assign to each variable a weight related to its role and importance on the whole. Finally, aggregation leads to the development of a synthetic indicator.

The second remark that can be made about the aforementioned typology concerns eclecticism. The risk of eclecticism is to lead to syncretism, that is, to add magnitudes that have nothing in common and therefore, to obtain an aggregation stripped of any real economic meaning. Social measurement is an area of analysis where the risk of syncretism is present. Because well-being is made up of diverse and, sometimes, unmatched elements, its evaluation may run up against the choice of a common denominator

To assess basic needs, technicians proceed in stages. The first is to quantify the needs in a given unit, i.e. to establish real physical units. For example, food is measured in kilocalories, education in the number of years of schooling (level), the quality of education by the number of schools and teachers, reported to the population, etc. The second step is to convert these physical units into monetary units. Possible transformation concerning indicators has made it possible to «measure what is not measurable» in monetary terms. However, since mathematical reference is not the same for indicators and their system, designers of indicators must take into account the risk of syncretism.

Given that the measure of a situation is aimed at improving it, all social domains are subject to quantification, because it is thus in real terms that it makes perfect sense.

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Data are related more to each other than measured on the same underlying continuum, and the analysis must expose the relationships that allow an understanding of the numerous underlying phenomena.

Thus defined, data can be compared, in linguistics, to the sequencing of words into a sentence. A word is best understood when it is contextualized, rather than isolated. Contextualization is the operation by which a situation is restored to understand the meaning of a word, a proverb, a saying. *Each piece of data finds its meaning from the relationships it has with other data, and not by itself.* Eclecticism refers to the process of borrowing from the various systems the best theses, when they are reconcilable, rather than building a new system. With each data processing, there are many similar cases that hide quite different realities. The relationships between data seem more meaningful of the production process than are the data level. The accumulation of data on agents as economic agents does not make it possible to better describe them. Indeed, description and, beyond, understanding seems helpful only in a framework of theoretical modeling on indicators. In other words, if the data prove to be fundamental, the theoretical model that seeks to explain their relationships, their nature, their causes and their consequences, is even more so, since it alone allows a relevant interpretation of the data.

2. **How to conceptualize dynamics in Africa?**

The need to rethink the indicators and terminologies that underlie classical economic thinking in Europe, by adapting it to the social realities of the African continent, is one of the challenges that AROA has set itself.

This alternative ambition is already welcome for some African intellectuals, like the Senegalese economist Felwine Sarr and many others before him.

Why and how can the African continent leave neocolonial logic at a time when the knowledge industries and imaginative universes that are mobilized to transform it are completely out of step with the complexity of its reality which, in many ways, transcends Western classical rationalism? How could this epistemological about-turn be possible, if access to our past and present realities is mediated by intellectual instruments made available by neocolonial reason, to which our governments constantly conform to obtain two-digit economic growth rates, as proof of economic achievements, according to the Bretton Woods institutions?

This is fundamentally the question that Felwine Sarr attempted to answer in his essay «Afrotopia» which, for him, is above all an invitation to «think of Africa differently», by giving up the criteria of rating agencies on Africa, which are far from taking into consideration certain aspects key to a full understanding of the mechanisms governing African societies in their heterogeneities and diversity.

This invites us to conduct a debate of our own on the balance of political, economic, cultural, symbolic and ecological matters in African societies. In this perspective, one of the first projects is to have civilizational debates; that is to say, to think about the type of societies that we want to build, and the values we want to put at the heart of these societies.

Thus, far from confining ourselves to a purely economic analysis, even economists, even if related themes recur regularly, we must favor approaches to the issue of Africa and its development, not in a classical fashion, but rather by going back to the roots of the emergence of certain concepts, from a purely African background, and by discovering the omissions, gaps, limits and problems related to its Western perspective. This pleads for the following postulate: Africa is the continent with the longest history, and must be mature enough to know what it wants for itself, and what it wants to become.

Therefore, starting from the epistemological fragmentation and downgrading of the African continent, AROA members plead for a new conceptual approach, by inviting Africans to definitively stop being dependent on the big modes or injunctions coming from outside, and to design a sovereign and endogenous way of its own.

Indeed, we are very aware of the depth of the evil, and of the fact that lexicological dismantling and conceptual development must be part of a process of decolonization. Especially since our elites, who provided our countries with access to independence, have not been ambitious enough, in that regard. They have sometimes been perceived by some as victims of a certain intellectual and political laziness, because they adopted a brand of statehood completely out of step with the mechanism that governs the lives of the masses and this has led to distortions and to the creation of institutions ineligible to impact African realities.

Such «democratic» institutions are essentially far from representing the groups, communities and individuals they are meant to represent.

The proposed option is to make a radical break with the theoretical fundamentals of «The Colonial
... Un rapport pour l’Afrique et par l’Afrique

Library» that is to say, to simply engage in a «battle of representation». This fierce battle that Africans must wage to regain their «intellectual sovereignty» is the spearhead of all other sovereignties.

The liberation of the African continent and its peoples will not be achieved without liberation from the colonial episteme; and in order to have an impact on our realities, to hope to transform them in a way in keeping with popular aspirations, we must have the capacity to understand ourselves, by thinking by ourselves about our own singularity.

From the beginning of his essay, Felwine Sarr strongly asserts that the concept of «development» is an illusion, or even an epistemological trap, and that Africa has no «backwardness» to catch up with; that what Africa is really suffering from is not economic «underdevelopment» or the low level of per capita income, but rather its inability to analyze itself by its own categories, and to produce «its own metaphors for the future». «Africa has nobody to catch up with. She must no longer run along the paths indicated to her, but walk briskly along the path she has chosen for herself. Her status as the eldest daughter of humanity requires her to step out of the competition, out of this childish universe where nations are watching each other to know who has accumulated the most wealth; out of this frantic and irresponsible race that endangers the social and natural conditions of life. Her only urgency is to live up to her potential. She must complete her decolonization by a meaningful encounter with herself».

It should be remembered that the concept of development that can be considered «hollow» in its materialization in Africa, has been an integral part of the African socio-economic and political thought and know-how since the end of the Second World War. The concept accompanied the beginning of national liberations, and the launching of the post-independence social contract for the integration of African communities, whose diversity is still an equation, at a time when it should be an asset that founds a «basic identity», such as has been imagined by Cheikh Anta Diop.

Even if, today the concept is disavowed in the name of alignment with the West, it remains very widely used and includes a battery of sub-concepts, such as agrarian transformation, industrialization, stability, economic growth, technology, redistribution, inequality, training, employment, environmental sustainability, gender dynamics, governance, etc.

But, in its economic dimension, development cannot begin without emphasizing the importance of the articulation to be found with «relational capital», which is one of the focal points by which we must think about «informality» in African productive dynamics, and the urgent need to increase the production and dissemination of knowledge intrinsic to Africa.

In putting forward such a thesis, one pleads for the construction of new paradigms, the valorization of endogenous knowledge, the creation of a new methodological apparatus, and a break with the linearity which keeps the continent in the same conceptual and ideological straitjacket, that is, economic liberalism. Therefore, «new» economics must have the mission to produce a systematic thought with its own concepts and theoretical models that will give an academic and scientific value to practices other than those to be found in the current literature.

3. How to measure well-being and progress?

This question raises many serious problems, the most characteristic of which are discussed below :

**Conceptual problems** : progress is an essential positivist concept. But what does it mean? In the absence of a taxonomy on progress whose possibility is still hypothetical, the conceptual problems posed by this notion do not find any single answer. The difficulty is all the more serious as the notion of progress is historically suspect, even criminogenic, since it is in the name of this notion that peoples have been enslaved. But, on the other hand, the aspirations of people to overcome the adversities of everyday life, such as job loss, illness, low level of education, etc., are legitimate, and the tools that measure them are essential, if only to evaluate the strategies put in place.

**Methodological problems** : can we construct a single or simple indicator or, on the contrary, should resign ourselves to adopting a battery of indicators produced by others? In addition to their understanding, how to measure the socio-economic dynamics at work? What social use do they have? How do the development strategies designed respond to the challenge of inclusion?

**Analytical problem** : how to turn statistical information into knowledge. What are the new tools?

**Operational issues** : how to work with statistical data producers, the media, and policymakers? How to produce statistical data that tracks actual economic dynamics?

**Political problems** : democracy is, in principle, a confrontation of projects (visions of the future) in
the etymological sense of the term. But a basic requirement must be met if this confrontation is not to be a simple petition for principles: that is to say, in what way will the proposed future represent progress? This is the «democratic politeness» of which Souleymane Bachir Diagne speaks.

4. Development for Africans: What original or specific indicators?

Africans have the same physiological, social, personal or psycho-spiritual needs as all humans.

What makes Africa’s development challenges special, but not necessarily unique, is that for two centuries of colonization, neo-colonialism and globalization, Africans have tended not to believe that development is synonymous with capacity building for self-sustaining growth of the goods and services needed to meet the human needs of their populations. On the contrary, they believe that the development of Africa requires the extension and deepening of colonial-style development, updated to adapt to the current conditionalities of «development partners», and to maintain the African «concept of development» within the framework of colonial development.

Most African governments and their internal partners and, mostly Western, external development partners, reinforce the colonial paradigm in the name of development, ignoring Einstein’s warning that «we cannot solve our problems with the same thought that we used, to create them». Such governments thus make it impossible for Africa’s peoples to develop Africa for the peoples of Africa. AROA should consider developing alternative development indicators for Africa’s development, with a focus on:

- Achievements and setbacks in access to the physiological necessities of life (such as food, including necessary micronutrients; shelter, clothing, medical and health services, sanitation, educational and recreational facilities, and defense capabilities).

- Measures taken or rejected to develop and maintain indigenous scientific and technological capacity to meet the physiological needs of the population on the basis of self-reliance, if possible, and collective self-rule (where «collective» refers to Africa and the whole African family) if necessary.

- The fact that food, shelter, clothing and other physiological necessities are identified separately and in relation to goods and services accessible from local resources, resources from other African states or the African Diaspora - or from the imitation of solutions and habits imported from outside African areas and the Diaspora.

- The measures taken by various branches of the African family to promote its development, eliminate obstacles to African pride, discourage psychopathologies denounced by Frantz Fanon in « Black skins, white masks»; and to encourage Africans and people of African descent to consider their own dignity as meaningless, if indignities are freely inflicted on theirs, all over the world.

5. Beyond GDP to talk about well-being

Common notions such as development, social progress or social well-being, are also the goals of public policies. To monitor the evolution or impact of their actions on these objectives, these are based on indicators of well-being. Among these indicators, the gross domestic product (GDP) or the GDP/per head, has, for a long time, been the reference indicator of the level of well-being of the populations. Thus, the goal of economic growth has been equated with that of social well-being. In this sense, Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2009) argue: «We want to make of GDP, as sophists would have said, the measure of everything: achievements, well-being, quality of life, while it represents only a measure of market economic activity» (p. 24-25).

However, results such as those of Easterlin (1974, 2001) show that the increase in per capita gross domestic product (GDP / capita) does not translate into a feeling of increased well-being among the populations. In addition, the participatory study commissioned by the World Bank in 2000 to collect perceptions of poverty from the poor themselves: The Voices of the Poor (Narayan et al., 2000) shows that they have a definition of their own a situation that goes far beyond the market dimensions included in GDP.

Thus, the question that arises from the 2000s can be summed up as follows: «Beyond GDP, how to measure well-being? »


In proposing alternative measures to GDP, several approaches to well-being have emerged. Among these, the Capability Approach (CA) of economist and Nobel prize winner Amartya Kumar Sen, has been the most influential in redefining «well-being» or poverty. Countries like England, Germany or France have relied on it to think about social issues like poverty or social progress. In addition, the CA is the theoretical framework of the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP); the paradigm of human development, empowerment, and several indicators of multidimensional poverty, such as the Oxford poverty human initiative’s Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (OPHI).

CA is a theoretical framework that allows a rethinking of the well-being concept, by providing a space for evaluation, which is one of the real liberties or opportunities available to an individual. It criticizes conventional approaches for relying on resources that are the means, not the ends, and thus do not take into account human diversity in the conceptualization and measure of well-being.

Thus, this approach makes it possible to think and evaluate well-being according to the reality of contexts or countries. This is why we propose it as a theoretical framework for an alternative reflection on well-being in the African context. Indeed, there are many socio-cultural aspects, such as social links, which can be promoted, and are not taken into account in the GDP or in the human development indicators of African countries. (Sarr, 2015)

The CA helps build indicators that integrate these aspects, and thus have an indicator of well-being that reflects the things that matter, and not just what we count.

6. Make informal economic dynamics intelligible

One of the aims of the attempt to reverse the epistemological measure of well-being that will be made by the AROA is to search, through the construction of an indicator, for a measure to provide

the answer to two fundamental questions: what are valuable things? What is the value of these things?

Inventing new measuring instruments is not intended to be part of a technicist approach; nor to turn away from the social, political and economic issues that shape the lives of Africans; it is a matter of looking elsewhere, inwards, by clearing new paths in the characterization of popular dynamics of the real economy. Is this so-called “informal” economy that we seek to disqualify really marginal? Standard conceptual approaches are damaging popular dynamics, reducing the scope and potential of the initiatives they contain. In addition, they minimize the processes at work by describing them and measuring them by default, in the “classical” incomplete framework of economic studies and national accounts.

The emphasis is on the accounting, regulatory and fiscal dimensions, in defiance of the responses that this type of productive units brings to a capitalist society in crisis. A careful reading of the current economic processes suggests redefining the norm («formal economy») and the margin («informal economy»), in a capitalist context where we have known, for more than fifteen years, that in Africa more than 60% of urban employment is marginal, and that this labor force accounts for 54.2% of GDP (Charmes, 2000) 167 In addition to the rehabilitation of a socio-economic sector of ecological, social and solidarity-based entrepreneurial initiatives, the objective of AROA is to promote debates on the economic orientations to be followed168. Coming mostly from the base of the pyramid, the actors of the informal economy know how to find offers adapted to such an economy.

These actors have peculiar stories, pursue non-linear trajectories, nurture ambitions that deserve to be supported and amplified.

To accompany them, one should know better, them and their working conditions, and constraints, be these institutional, logistical, legal, societal, and technical. But what do we know about such «atypical» entrepreneurs? Who are they? What is their profile? What is their educational background? Where does their seed money come from? What are the sources of funding for their activities? Are they participatory sources? Solidarity-based? Cooperative? Classic? What are their economic models? What types of jobs do they create? What are the rules and regulations of employment contracts, if they exist? What type of management do they adopt? What types of markets do they target? And yet, in the literature, there are biographies on entrepreneurs, including «Mama Benz».

This kind of approach is to be preferred in AROA. This would allow us to answer the following questions: How, and at what level, do these informal dynamics contribute to «social use»? What social added value do they bring? How do these actors contribute to the social compromises that maintain the unstable balance of African societies?

The few biographies and evaluations of informal dynamics are coupled with another omission, the lack of longitudinal territorial monographs. How to mainstream research in the long term? Without «social profitability», acceptance of the researcher may be problematic. To avoid “one shot” caused by the preparation of reports commissioned by international organizations or cooperation agencies, ad hoc studies, consultancy missions, we must work to mainstream research.

While we have regularly published statistical data on international trade relations (Africa/Outside the World), we are terribly lacking in knowledge about sub-national economic trade. What goods are exchanged within national economies? AROA must explore those ways to make of the systematic and thorough knowledge of endogenous economic dynamics, a lever of an African Renaissance, and provide insights that help increase the visibility of entrepreneurs themselves and of policy makers.

168 According to Jean-Luc Stalon (2015), in 2014, 26% of Africans created businesses, compared to 7.4% in Europe and 13.4% in the United States. These entrepreneurs need the support of the state to improve the business environment, the protection of goods and people and access to an appropriate banking service to promote investment and the creation of skilled employment.
Additional bibliography


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