

**Paper Presented to CODESRIA's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Summit**  
**Conference**  
**Dakar, Senegal: 10 to 12 December 2003**

**DRAFT**

**Some Reflections on the Evolution CODESRIA, Critical Social**  
**Science, and the African Social Science Community**  
**By**  
**Abdalla Bujra**

**Not for quotation without author's permission**

**November 2003**  
**Addis Ababa**

**Some Reflections on the Evolution CODESRIA, Critical Social Science, and the African Social Science Community**

**By  
Abdalla Bujra**

**Paper Presented to CODESRIA's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Summit  
Conference  
Dakar, Senegal: 10<sup>th</sup> December 2003**

**Introduction**

This paper will start by blowing our trumpet – something I am very bad at – by saying that there is no doubt in my mind that CODESRIA is the most successful Pan-African research institution in the continent since independence. The success is obvious. Today we are here to celebrate that achievement brought about by the dedicated effort of many people – but particularly the commitment and loyalty of the social science community itself – old and young, men and women.

The first part of this paper will contain a personal perspective – a brief institutional history of CODESRIA.

The second part will look at the original vision of CODESRIA's founding fathers and use it to attempt a quick if surface assessment of CODESRIA's impressive productive path since its founding to the present. Given the continuously changing – some would say deteriorating - macro political-economic situation, I will ask the question as to whether CODESRIA has loyally maintained its course on the path of that vision, or has there been deviation – however slight and subtle.

Thirdly this paper will end by looking at some of the challenges facing CODESRIA in this age of the “New Liberal Imperialism”. Should CODESRIA stay on its present course, go back to the founding vision of “struggle for fundamental changes of the conditions of the African

people”, or adapt and reform to the pressures and requirements of the now open, aggressive militaristic and some would say fascistic imperialist.

**Part I: The Institutional History of CODESRIA.**

Given the fact that CODESRIA has not published an official history of itself, this brief outline of CODESRIA’s institutional history is basically aimed at informing the younger generation of the origins, vision, struggle, and efforts which went into CODESRIA from its early days as an unknown organisation run by two persons to the present today CODESRIA with over 50 person, a robust budget and an international reputation and respect. This history is long and complicated but its outline can be broadly traced through the following phases in its growth - Origin, Early Phase, Coming of Age, Consolidation and Expansion, Crises, and Renewal.

**(i) CODESRIA’s Origin**

But where do I start? January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1973? Surely not! CODESRIA has taught me to respect historical processes – which do not have neat starting points. Organized African social science research, in the narrowest meaning of this term, had its “beginnings” in 1964, in Belagio, Italy. 1973 simply formalized the transformation of an on-going process in African social science research, into a qualitatively different and more dynamic process which has developed to present day CODESRIA and which we are celebrating. Even the acronym CODESRIA did not start in 1973.

**So what is the significance of 1964 and Belagio in Italy?**

**In 1964, the Rockefeller Foundation organised an important seminar at its Belagio Villa in Italy on the theme of Economic Research in Africa. The purpose of the seminar was to review the type of research that had so far taken place and to discuss future direction in the context of post-colonial Africa. There were 10 directors of research institutes participating, two of whom were Africans (from Nigeria and Sudan) and the remaining eight were British and French. The organisers were, of course, Americans.**

**After this seminar Prof. Onitiri (who had participated in the seminar) took the initiative to form in 1967 the first pan-African social science**

organisation which was called the *Conference of Directors of Economic and Social Research Institutes in Africa* (CODESRIA). Soon after, Prof. Onitiri was able to hold a CODESRIA conference at NISER, Ibadan, with an increased participation of African Directors of research institutes. Cooperation among research institutes was a central theme of discussion at the Conference. A Standing Committee was elected from amongst the Research Institutes with Prof. Onitiri as its Chairman. Prof. Onitiri continued to run CODESRIA from NISER and for the next three years began to set up a Depository Centre (a Data Bank).

In 1971 a Conference was held in Nairobi and chaired by Prof. Dharam Ghai, then Director of IDS. The theme of the Conference was "*Economic Cooperation and Integration in Africa*". At the Conference, Mr. Samir Amin was elected Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee, and IDEP designated as the official CODESRIA Depository Center(CDC). At the same time a Secretariat for the CODESRIA Depository Center was formally established to be based in IDEP. However, Samir Amin changed the function of the Center from "mere cataloguing of research to "analytical rather than on a cataloguing basis, and which would incorporate fundamental research results (original and print), conducted in member and other Institutes, Departments and Research Centres on the African continent". I believe that the idea of change expressed here was the seed and the basis of transformation from the old to the new CODESRIA which took place, two years later, on 31 January 1973.

#### The transformation of the old CODESRIA and the birth of the present CODESRIA

In 1972, Prof. Onitiri took his sabbatical at IDEP and his presence there, in cooperation with Samir Amin, greatly facilitated the evolution of CODESRIA. By November 1972, the old CODESRIA had received a small grant from the World Bank for its Secretariat, and a promise from the Ford Foundation for a grant to support its Data Bank and workshops.

Sometime during 1972, Samir Amin and Prof. Onitiri, for reasons yet to be disclosed decided to change the character of CODESRIA. Towards this end Samir Amin prepared for a founding conference for the new CODESRIA, the conference theme being "*Africa and the EEC*". The Conference was held at IDEP from 29-31 January 1973. On 31 January, the Conference constituted itself into the founding General Assembly, passed CODESRIA's Charter, approved 8 research themes and elected its first Executive Committee (EC).

**(ii) The Early Phase of CODESRIA:1973-1979**

During these six years, COD. went through two phases – firstly overcoming an internal crises and setting its house in good order, and secondly consolidating itself as an institutions and expanding its activities.

The internal crises emanated from the take over of the old COD. as an institutions. This presented the leadership of the new COD. with some serious problems which took over two years (1973 to 1975) to resolve. The first major challenge facing the new COD. was therefore to put its house in order before it could undertake any serious activities.

Samir Amin was the Director of IDEP, which was a UN institution. He had accepted to host the old and later the new CODESRIA at IDEP. He thus became the Executive Secretary of the new CODESRIA which however was effectively being run, from IDEP, by its fulltime Coordinator – who had continued the program of the old CODESRIA – without consulting the ES. More importantly, funds contributed to the old and new CODESRIA for the Data Bank and other activities, were largely banked in the personal account of the Coordinator in London. Thus the new CODESRIA had started badly – continuing the very activities, which it wanted to change, and establishing a reputation of dishonesty and lack of accountability – contrary to its democratic vision. Samir Amin took responsibility to host and develop an institutions with a noble vision but was soon facing a nightmarish situation. He therefore had to put CODESRIA's house in good order. Fortunately the EC of CODESRIA was made up of highly experienced and mature scholars who agreed with Samir Amin's suggestion of reorganizing CODESRIA. The plan was to recruit a fulltime ES for CODESRIA and establishing it as a separate legal entity but to be housed in IDEP. IDEP was to finance CODESRIA's Secretariat on loan to be repaid when CODESRIA had raised enough resources. The use of UN funds to fund a non-UN organization (CODESRIA) gave fodder to the anti-Communist UN bueareacrats in NY who ruthlessly used this situation to attack and undermine Samir Amin. The UN pressure on Samir continued until his resignation early in 1980. But this situation presented a serious dilemma and challenge to CODESRIA.

In 1975 the EC of CODESRIA appointed a fulltime ES of CODESRIA who took over all the legal responsibility of CODESRIA. More importantly the ES faced the double challenge of raising funds for CODESRIA and also moving out of IDEP. At this point CODESRIA was poor, with no legal status in Senegal, a bad reputation with the Donors and was being chased from IDEP by the NY bureaucrats. And it was at this point that IDRC offered some limited funding for the Secretariat but on condition that COD. physically moved out of IDEP and a full time ES be appointed. Samir gracefully advised acceptance of this offer and helped convince the Senegalese Government to provide CODESRIA with a rent free building and a legal status as an International Organization with Diplomatic Status. By 1980, CODESRIA had obtained some limited funding, a legal status and a building to house its offices. From this point on, CODESRIA, after putting its house in order, was essentially on its own with no institutional backing. To embark on its ambitious programme, it had to raise funds, a major challenge, and at the same time overcome the overwhelming difficulties facing its proposed programme. Samir Amin, under great pressure from anti-communist bureaucrats in NY, resigned from IDEP soon afterward.

The second challenge facing CODESRIA during this period was the monumental difficulties of mobilizing the then nascent and fragmented African social science community. While the old COD. centered around the then few existing Institutes focusing on *economic development*, and that their concern was the gathering of information on economic research which was largely based on conventional social science, the new COD. expanded its constituency to social science Faculties and Institutes – a much larger constituency – and later to all social science researchers as individuals. More importantly, as will be seen later, the new CODs mission was to develop critical and relevant social science based on African realities in order to fight the dominance and hegemony of conventional social science; to attract African social science researchers away from the conventional to critical social science research; to overcome the disciplinary fragmentation by adopting a holistic approach, and to overcome the linguistic and physical fragmentation of the researchers. And most importantly to develop horizontal African linkages amongst researchers and away from the vertical linkages to metropolitan research centers. This is a tall order for an organization which (a) had two offices at the back of IDEP and was managed by an ES and a Secretary; (b) it had very little

resources ( for two years it was borrowing money from IDEP to run its Secretariat); and (c) the social science map of African researchers was mostly blank because of difficulties and limitation of communications – linguistically, electronically and in terms of transportation.

To carry out these activities CODESRIA had only the ES and one bilingual Secretary. A publication assistant and three more local secretarial staff were added. By 1979, some printing equipment for basic *Africa Development* (AD) work had been acquired. The Secretariat was operating on a shoestring budget, cutting corners all the time. The "artisanal" mode of operation was effective but drew considerable cynical comments from the bureaucrats of the well funded UN and Inter-Governmental Organizations in Dakar. But despite these limited resources COD had, by 1979, carried out several major activities under very difficult conditions.

Despite these constraints of resources and personnel, between 1975 and 1979, COD's activities reached a very respectable level of mobilisation and reach of researchers as well as publication. These were:-

* Conferences and workshops		12
* Participation: Researchers		486
	From RI.& Faculties	143
* Papers Presented		183
* Publications:	Books	5
	Africa Development	12
	ADRA	3
	Roster	1
	Newletter - Numbers	15
* Unpublished Papers		110

By 1979, it became clear that the relation between the amount of activities and number of professional personnel needed urgent change. The post of a Deputy Executive Secretary was then created, and an appointment made in 1980.

It must be remembered that CODESRIA was the first major Pan-African organisation to be established and to operate on a purely voluntary basis outside the inter-Governmental and International systems. It was thus a pioneering organisation in an untried territory. Other organisations such as AAPS and AAPAM established around the same time, had remained stagnant. Hence what COD. was able to accomplish in such a short time, in terms of mobilising researchers and publication, was remarkable.

But these figures do not indicate the effectiveness of the activities carried out. While a large number of researchers from many Universities, R.I. and from many countries participated in COD activities within such a short period, there were serious difficulties in carrying out the core activity of COD. – comparative research by the MWGs. This was a new and pioneering approach to research aimed at bringing out the generality within African societies in the continent and at the same time delineating the specificity of Africa within the world system. The problems centred around language, research tradition, lack of knowledge of research in different countries, difficulties of communication, lack of resources and difficulties of finding experienced Coordinators who could overcome these problems and manage such a pioneering and difficult task. In varying degree, these difficulties have persisted to the present. And COD. was thus forced to try various models in an attempt to make these MWGs. operate effectively and successfully. The introduction of the NWG was a by product of these difficulties, although this programme had and still has its own intrinsic value and merit. There are of course difficulties with regards to NWGs but far easier to deal with than those of the MWGs. Hence the effectiveness of these two programmes was tentative and at preliminary stage.

In addition to Conferences, Workshops, research groups, and publications, CODESRIA forged links with other African regional and sub-regional organisations – in some cases creating some of these organisations – while at the same time establishing strong links with other Third World organisations. Within the continent it supported AAWORD and AAPS as major regional organisation, while helping the creation of OSSREA, SAUSC, Central African Association of Economists and The Economics Faculties of French Speaking Countries of West Africa.



**CODESRIA during this period established very strong links with its ideological partner CLACSO not only through attending each others conferences but establishing ground rules for comparative research of joint research teams. CODESRIA inspired the Arab researchers to begin thinking of setting up their own social science organisations to compete with those which had been established by American and European support. The end result was AICARDES.**

**The third major challenge of COD. was to raise sufficient funds to pay its debt to IDEP (December 1974, USD80,000/-) and to finance its Secretariat and activities. Given the negative reputation of COD, this was a serious problem. At the end of 1975, COD received a two year grant from IDRC to support its Secretariat (roughly 50% of the Secretariat cost – but allocated to specific lines of expenditure). In 1976 SAREC agreed to finance the second GA Meeting Conference in Cairo, after which it gave a one year general support for 1977. It was only in 1978 that SAREC gave its first general two-year core support. Giving a sense of security to COD for the first time. There were additional support from the FES ( for printing equipment), from NUFFIC, NORAD and some UN Agencies – all giving small funds for specific activities**

**However the two-year grant from SAREC was a major breakthrough for COD. The breakthrough was not simply in terms of the two year grant, but in the non-conditions which were not attached to CODESRIA. It was core support which for the first time allowed CODESRIA flexibility to use the SAREC support in the best way that CODESRIA prefers. SAREC was taking a big risk, which, I am happy to say paid off - because it was SAREC funds which really allowed COD. to plan and undertake serious activities for the first time in its history.**

**The period 1973 to 1979 was the most trying, difficult but at the same time exciting period. The new COD was born into a storm – a crises – which took two years to resolve – 73 to 75. The two years following 76-77 were also very difficult because of lack of resources and because of the sheer difficulties of starting a new institution with new and highly innovative programme in an untried territory. Finally the last two years 77-79 saw the beginnings of**

serious activities, and although on a trial and error basis, a respectable amount of work was accomplished within the context of the constraints facing COD at the time. This period however was very important in that it enabled COD to enter the new decade of the 80s with some confidence about its mission, capacity and its future.

(iii) CODESRIA Comes of Age:1980-1985

This was a significant phase of COD's development. During this period COD began to develop its own identity and personality and consolidated itself as an institution; it began to overcome the initial but critical problems of Working Groups research. It expanded its linkages with African organisations within the continent and with other organisations internationally. It also began to comment, on behalf of African researchers, on major issues affecting Africa; and finally but most critically, it was able to secure steady funding from the three traditional donors (SAREC, FF and IDRC).

In 1980 COD finally moved out of IDEP under intense pressure from the UN officials in NY. With the help of Samir Amin, COD was able to secure the generous support of the Senegalese Government which provided rent free office building as well as legal and diplomatic status to CODESRIA. Being out of IDEP was important because many of our own researchers had tended to associate COD with IDEP and therefore as a UN funded and supported organisation – a wrong and in our view an uncomplimentary view of COD. It also ended the petty pressures and harassments from small and petty bureaucrats at IDEP and in NY. COD thus began to develop its own personality as an independent Pan African institution.

A second significant event at the beginning of this period was a joint external evaluation of COD by three donors – SAREC, IDRC and FF. The evaluation report recommended that the donors should support COD. In 1984, the three donors, after consultation with COD, undertook another external evaluation. This time the team of evaluators were two Africans and one Latin American. The team travelled extensively in different parts of Africa. This evaluation team also recommended that the funding

organisations should continue supporting COD. At the same time COD itself requested a third evaluation which was undertaken by an Independent Review Committee chaired by Prof. Onitiri with five well known African scholars (including the late Claude Ake).

These three evaluations and reviews were very important to COD. Their positive reports and recommendation led to the final removal of any doubts amongst the donors on the credibility and integrity of COD as well as the critical role it was playing as the leading if not the premier Pan-African social science organisation.

During this period COD began to overcome some of the problems encountered earlier in the implementation of research projects with Working Groups. Several MWG and NWG were implemented during this period producing serious research results thus setting important example which encouraged more Coordinators and researchers to get involved and committed in COD research activities. It must be remembered that this was a dark period for social scientists – young and old – throughout the continent as a result of SAPs programme and their effect on higher education. More importantly, most African researchers had little experience of and faith of African institutions working effectively – organising researchers, funding workshops and research, and publishing their products. COD was the only organisation, which was demonstrably, and successfully implementing such difficult research projects. This was a process which had began in the late seventies and had continued into the first half of the eighties. It was not surprising therefore that during this period, the core chain of COD activities – Conference/Workshop/Research/ Publication - expanded considerably. Here are some indicative figures - a rough balance sheet of the activities during this period.1980-1985.

**ACTIVITY BALANCE SHEET: 1980-1985.**

<b>*Conferences: General Assembly (82 &amp; 85)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>With CLACSO</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>With AICARDES</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>With AAPS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>*Project Workshops: 9 projects x 2 workshops</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>*Non-Programmed Activities</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>*Publications: Books</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Africa Development- numbers:</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Africana Newsletter-numbers:</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Directories of Research Institutes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Directories of Training "</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Roster of Social Scientists</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Occasional and Working Papers</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Declarations and Documents</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Unpublished Papers.</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>*New Initiatives</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>*Participation in Conferences and Workshops:</b>	
<b>Research Institutes &amp; Faculties</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>Researchers</b>	<b>790</b>
<b>Policy Makers</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Countries(African)</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>TW &amp; Northern Researchers/observers.</b>	<b>126</b>

This rough balance sheet shows an obviously much more active period, and despite the crises, a steadier and improved financial situation.

As can be seen from the above numerical profile of COD. activities during this period, there were two important initiatives which need brief comments.

Firstly the expansion of COD. activities to other third world regions – Latin America and nearer home, the Arab World. Relations between COD and CLACSO started from the early period of COD in 1973/74 when Samir had established strong relationship with Latin American scholars some of whom came to IDEP to participate in various activities. This link then translated into a COD-CLACSO bond based on ideological affinity – a relationship which has lasted to the present. It also led to the creation of joint WG to carry out comparative research on specific themes. With the Arab World on the other hand, COD essentially inspired the establishment of AICARDES – its equivalent in the Arab region. With

AICARDES too, COD. Initiated joint WG project. Hence the activities with these two organisations, were part of extending Africa's voice to these regions.

But relation with CLACSO and AICARDES were not at the expense of African regional and sub-regional organisations. This inter-African relations had been discussed earlier. The second innovation during this period was the starting of what we called Non-Programmed Activities. These were essentially activities which were not planned for and were often COD's reaction to specific Political situations or other needs and demands.

In the late 70s for example COD started two important projects:-

- (i) The SOWETO project – in support of students from South Africa and Namibia.
- (ii) The Relocation of African Intellectuals project – i.e. finding jobs for researchers (in African countries) who were forced to run from their countries for political reasons (this project was the forerunner of the Academic Freedom and Human Rights project).

In the first half of eighties (1980 –1985), it carried out the following important non-programmed activities:-

- (iii) COD started a “COD's Forum for Permanent Debate” – based in Dakar – a forum for distinguished people to give lectures.
- (iv) It also established official relations with the OAU – applying and getting – Observer Status, as well as initiating a possible project for COD to monitor for the OAU the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action.
- (v) Cooperation with the UNECA at the time headed by Prof. Adedeji, was more effective. COD held a joint conference on the LPA and a research project on “Foreign Exchange Leakage” – an issue which was important at the time. Both the Conference and the research project were successfully carried out and their reports were presented to a Conference of African Ministers.
- (vi) It held a conference on the World Bank Report “Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa” – better known as the Berg Report.
- (vii) A conference on Human rights and Development – with special reference to the OAU's Charter on Human and People's Rights (with the International Commission of Jurists)
- (viii) Conference on the African States in the Eighties (CODESRIA/AAPS)

- (ix) Conference on the African Economies and the SAPs (COD/Ahmadu Bello University with contributions from CLACSO) – 1985.

Through these activities, COD was trying to clarify a fundamental and strategic issue. Firstly it wanted to establish its presence at and relations with two of the most important African continental institutions – presumably to try to influence them! Secondly it was looking for an effective mechanism to respond to important political issues of concern not only to the social science community, but to the African people at large. In other words how to effectively react to important political issues and how to influence such events. This problem touches a fundamental nerve of COD. which I will deal with in the next section of this paper.

Clearly the period 1980-85 saw COD coming of age – its perennial financial insecurity having been resolved through improved relations with the donors; its research and publication programme expanding; its links with regional and Third World organisations also expanding. COD.'s confidence is clearly shown in its seeking Observer Status with the OAU and in its beginnings to enter the difficult field of politics and policy research. During this period it held two GA Meetings and came through three auditing. By 1985 COD had become the premier social science institution in Africa, overshadowing all other institutions, including the well established and better funded (at the time) Association of African Universities – then known as the “Club of Vice-Chancellors”. COD was now ready to conquer new territories despite the difficult period Africa was going through and the gloomy predictions made by many about its future – both immediate and long term.

#### **Phase IV. COD's Unprecedented Expansion: Continentally and Internationally (1986-1995)**

Although by 1985 COD had come of age – it had secured its financial position to the extent this was possible of an NGO, it had consolidated its core programmes, it had expanded its reach throughout the continent, it had developed a mechanism for reacting to major political events and had establish its good reputation internationally. Yet Africa was going through serious political and economic crises of unprecedented scale. Higher education institutions were in terrible mess, starved of funding and kept under tight political leash. Social scientists were going through serious economic difficulties – moonlighting, consulting

and migrating. At the same time the so called “third generation” academics were coming out of the problematic but African pipeline of higher education. This difficult macro-political and economic condition which began in late seventies, intensified in the eighties, continued into the nineties.

Yet remarkably it was under these conditions that COD’s unprecedented expansion took place. There is an explanation to this remarkable achievement, which we hope one day will be told to us by those who led COD during this time. However at this point, one is tempted to make a short comment on this issue. It is clear that there was – a vacuum – which COD had to fill. There was great demand and thirst by the enlarged but pauperised social science community for basic social science resources such as books, journals, and particularly literature by Africans etc. The phrase “book famine” accurately reflected the need of the time. This situation was caused by the deterioration and collapse of the higher education institutions in the continent as a direct consequence of SAP imposed conditionalities. Simultaneously this was the period when the deteriorating. Universities were producing a new generation of researchers/academics. These academics were therefore thirsty for an effective African institution which would provide for their needs. And to the great credit of COD’s leadership it foresaw this need and worked hard to fill in the vacuum. Hence the great expansion of COD. during this difficult period, not only in terms of its capacity building programmes but also in terms of effective and large scale participation in COD activities by all generations of academics and their institutions. It is therefore not surprising that during this period – 1985-1995 –capacity building programmes were introduced and expanded quickly. More importantly these programmes were consciously customised for the younger, generation of researchers. Indeed COD. went through an important phase, of what I consider a false debate, about generational power and the participation of the younger scholars in COD activities. In any case this particular decade saw an almost exclusive focus on mobilising the younger scholars and at the same time mainstreaming women in COD activities. Most of the older scholars were too busy with consultancies.

Without giving figures, it is clear that by 1996, COD’s programmes, its outputs and the participation of academics, had expanded enormously.

However there were signs that not everyone was happy. At the 1995 General Assembly meeting two well known members of CODESRIA complained that the EAST African sub-region felt marginalized and that some of the researchers there viewed CODESRIA as focussing largely on West Africa while others viewed it as a “club of few friends”. Even if such characterisation was not correct, the complaints from such well known researchers was a signal that there are serious possibilities that a section or sections of the social science community could be or actually were not completely satisfied with COD. And it is precisely such dissatisfaction which could lead to rebellion or could support radical changes in COD’s direction. And this is largely what happened when COD’s leadership changed after the 1995 General Assembly, the retirement of the second fulltime Ex. Sec. and the appointment of a third and younger Ex. Sec. And this led to a serious crises in COD. – a crises that almost brought the collapse of the institution.

Yet despite such complaints and possible dissatisfactions of some section of the social science community, there is no doubt, even without giving any figures, that by 1996 COD’s programmes, its outputs and the participation of academics, had expanded enormously – particularly in the area of capacity building.

**Phase v :      The Crises Period:1996-2000.**

This phase of COD’s evolution is so recent (it ended only three years ago) and bitter memories are so fresh, that it is very difficult to say very much about it. Fortunately for all of us the crises was short lived. And the credit goes to all those who were involved in resolving favourably this crises. More importantly, we still do not know the full story of the crises and are awaiting a proper account from those who were directly involved. Nevertheless a few brief comments on this crises phase are in order.

Firstly as I have pointed out earlier, COD went into a serious crises immediately after its founding in January 1973. That crises lasted two years while this second crises lasted four years. In both cases COD. survived both crises largely due to the wise leadership which in both



occasion faced the crises. And although we do not have full access to the details of the second crises, there are lessons to be learnt from both crises.

Secondly we must understand that those who were at the helm of COD, and who brought about the second crises, came to their position of power democratically and not by force. Hence the first lesson to learn is that a similar crises can happen again, swiftly, and without warning.

Thirdly the core of the crises, as I understand it, rested on two platforms (a) on the personal behaviour and conduct of the ES, and (b) the shift initiated by the E.S. in the direction of COD's fundamental social science paradigm – from a critical and indigenised social science relevant to the African conditions to post-modernism.

On the choice of an ES, mistakes can be made in terms of an individual's personal integrity and honesty. Such mistakes can always be corrected. It is necessary however to be more vigilant and to have mechanism which are effective in the selection process.

However on the question of a person's intellectual integrity and firmness with regards to COD's social science approach, the issue is more complicated. The ES needs the support of at least a section of the EC and also at the General Assembly in order for him/her to change dramatically the direction of COD's social science paradigm. In this particular case, COD's direction was being changed by the ES towards post-modernism. And on post-modernism Samir Amin has commented thus “ I consider post-modernism an intellectual non-starter in the sense that beyond its hype, it offers no conceptual instrument capable of transcending the capitalist framework; neither does it demonstrate any capacity to inspire an innovative design for social change” (Ideology and Social Thought: The Intelligentsia and the Development Crises” (AD, 1994). Thus COD was moving from its traditional and founding position of a critical social science deeply committed to struggle against conventional social science which it believes provides the scientific legitimacy of Africa's underdevelopment and exploitation, to adopting this same conventional social science, which it has been struggling against, to become a framework for researcher to analyse the African reality.

And here clearly the ES had the support of a section of the social science community. And this raises the very serious question of the unity – ideological – of the social science community which COD is serving and depending on as its committed constituency. The lessons therefore is that there are internal divisions within the COD social science community and that the leadership of COD should not only be aware of these divisions but should know how to handle them with care.

The recapture of COD does not mean that these division have disappeared – or the base of support of the Crises leadership has disappeared. A correct analysis of COD's African constituency – especially the younger generation many of whom are now deeply embedded in the consultancy culture – is important and necessary.

**Phase vi: The Renewal of CODESRIA:2000 to the present.**

The post post-modernism COD and the return to its traditional centre of gravity, is not only an achievement by COD but in my view is the beginning of its renewal. This means several important issues must be born in mind by the new leadership.

Firstly to carefully study the Crises as well as the entire history of COD and learn lessons from this study.

Secondly COD is facing important challenges because of the dramatic changes which have taken place in the macro-political and economic situation in Africa and the global situation which has heralded the latest phase of imperialism – the New Liberal Imperialism.

Thirdly it must “plan for the future” – both medium and long term, in the light of its study of the past and of the changed and changing forces within the continent and internationally.

This will ensure a positive renewal of COD over a longer period and will enable it to avoid the potential crises which are always there – lurking in the corner.

## **Section II:**

### **CODESRIA Its original Mission: A personal Preliminary Assessment**

In this section of the paper I will focus on three issues. Firstly why, in 1973, was the old CODESRIA changed and transformed into the new CODESRIA, when technically, the old CODESRIA could have performed the functions as defined by the constitution of the new CODESRIA. Secondly, if the old COD had to be discarded, then what exactly was the mission of the 1973 COD – a mission which was never stated in its constitution? Thirdly, over a period of thirty years, has COD's mission changed or has it remained the same? And has COD achieved what it set out to achieve? Fourthly, what are the challenges facing COD now that it has just come out of a crises and is in its renewal phase but facing a dramatically different, hostile and aggressive global environment?

A formal answer to the first question would be that the old COD. was a club of Directors while the new COD is open to all Institutes/Faculties and their researchers and therefore more democratic. Secondly while the function of the old COD was mainly to collect bibliographic data of research already carried out, the new one is mandated to initiate research and to generate comparative research outcome. Thirdly while the old COD had focused on economic research, the new COD extended its focus to social science – all the discipline generally included under this title. Hence on the basis of the above there was some justification to transform the old to the new COD. And the mandate of the new COD reflected this change.

But according to the Executive Secretary, the objectives of the new COD themselves could be interpreted to mean that COD “should play a purely administrative and academically neutral role in its research and publication”. Yet when Samir Amin was handing over CODESRIA to Bujra (the newly appointed fulltime ES) in 1975, his assessment of CODESRIA' crises was going through at the time was that the then Coordinator of COD had “distorted the direction of the organization”.

What then was Cod's “direction”, as defined by Samir Amin and which was distorted by the Coordinator? From the point of view of Samir Amin, the “ideological direction” of the new COD should be radicalism and leftward in orientation and not to remain entrenched in

the liberal rightist ideology of conventional social science which was the ideological location of the old COD. From the beginning therefore, this issue of *ideology and direction* was thus at the core of COD's identity and its activities. In order to understand the significance of this issue, it is necessary to look at the deep roots of the intellectual and ideological background of those who were in the driving seat for the creation of the new COD. And these people were drawn from the two most important African centers advocating ideologically radical social science – namely Dakar (University of Dakar/IDEP) and the University of Dar es Salaam – the Dakar/Dar axis of radicalism

It is, therefore, necessary at this point to give a very brief and perhaps highly inadequate profile of these two centers whose *radicalism* became the driving force for the transformation of the old COD and that this radicalism became the *ideology which gave direction* to the new COD.

#### Intellectual-Ideological Background of COD

The radicalism of these two centers did not originate from or were driven by a few individuals. These two centers represented one important trend or tendency of the ideological mix of post independent Africa. This mix was made up of the following ideological tendencies:-

Firstly, Pan-Africanism which early in the sixties was largely captured by the states which created the OAU and confined Pan-Africanist ideals and thinking to the stultifying bureaucracy of the OAU – which eventually killed it as a movement.

Secondly, Nationalism as represented by the various forces which contended for power in the newly independent states. The radical wing of the nationalist had its roots in the movement as represented by Cesair, Fanon, Nkrumah, Sekou Toure and others. This radical nationalist lost the struggle for power during the sixties. Most of the independent African states were captured by those groups whom Fanon describe as ..... And the independent states embarked on a major programme of expanding higher education in the image of metropolitan institutions, social science and ideology. However, in some of these states, radical leftist political movements emerged and though marginal to the power centers and often brutally suppressed, nevertheless found some space in University debates. And those who espoused radical thinking often had to struggle for their survival. However conducive

environment and freedom for such radical thinking existed only in a few states – such as Senegal and Tanzania.

Thirdly, Western powers (Europe and the US), institutions and finance advocating establishment and conventional social science of Western capitalist ideology and culture moved in great force to help establish the expansion of higher education in African states and to make their social science the state approved and supported social science and to dominate research and training in all faculties and RI.

Finally different tendencies of Marxism – from Europe and North America, the Soviet Union, Asia – as well as the Dependencia school from Latin America were penetrating the thick walls of African Universities more as subterranean currents of thinking than the free contending and competing approaches to social science. Only a few countries (such as Tanzania and Senegal) freely allowed such competition and in such cases the “radical or critical” social science became a vocal voice as critique of the emerging post-independence societies, and advocating alternative forms of development.

By the late sixties, this mix of ideological elements in African countries -where Western establishment conventional social science dominated the higher education institutions and thinking in governments while radical and critical social science struggled to survive as underworld thought current – gave rise to the emergence of Dakar and Dar es Salaam as important centers. While Dakar’s radicalism was linked to the rich writings of Cesair, Fanon, Amin and French Marxist writers, Dar’s radicalism was more related to a mixture of the radical writings of African writers such as those of Nkrumah and Fanon (translated in 1969), Soviet Block trained students, Chinese/Vietnamese writings and of course the writings of British Socialist. While the Dakar radicalism expressed itself in the student’s riots of Dakar University in 1968, Dar’s radicalism expressed itself in the Arusha Declaration of 1967. Thus in the late 1960s radicalism was a strong political and ideological force in the Tanzanian state, while in Senegal radicalism was mainly a force in the University and at IDEP. Although in both countries these radical ideologies were confined to small groups of people (some politicians and some intellectuals) rather than with the urban lumpen or the peasants, nevertheless radicalism in the two countries had become a political force despite its

confinement to the elite. In these cases individuals played important role in the development and spread of the radical ideology in the two countries. And this brings us to the links among individuals who were based in the two Centers.

The Arusha Declaration of 1967 was a most important radical document of the time and its significance was that it was a ruling party policy document. Two persons who were critical in the formulation of these radical ideas in the Arusha Declaration were the late Abdul Rahman Babu and Ngombale Mwiru. While the elder Babu was a “product” of the radical wing of the British labour Party, the 1968 Pan African Accra Conference and the strong link with the Chinese Communist Party (he was representative of the Sin Hua News Agency), the younger Ngombale was a product of the University of Dakar and who took part in the 1968 riots. From Dakar, Samir Amin had strong contacts with Dar, particularly with Babu and also the University. The linkages between Dakar and Dar, though not very extensive, were nevertheless important. As ideological “fellow travelers” they were facing similar problems and were carrying out the same struggle. More importantly their significance is that the two centers were the “roots, the home ground” of the new COD.

The Arusha Declaration was a historic document which popularized radicalism widely throughout the continent - both amongst the middle class and ordinary people – at least those who became sensitized to it. Intellectually and morally, it raised many of the issues which were and still are of concern to the radical nationalist as well as to the socialist - of various tendencies. Amongst the central issues of the Declaration were

- (a) the exploitation of poor countries by the rich countries and therefore concern over the kinds of links and economic relations a poor country like Tanzania should have with the Industrialized North.
- (b) exploitation within Tanzania (and in other African countries) and therefore what kind of economic system should Tanzania have i.e. the role of the state versus the private sector;
- (c) the problem of accumulation and therefore the emergence of classes in relation to wealth distribution and equity;
- (d) the role of a political party, the leadership, and the civil service in a poor country in transition;

(e) and most important the Declaration offered a vision of a society in motion from a specific poor past, to a potentially better future, provided the political leadership kept to its objectives and kept the support and loyalty of the people.

Clearly these were issues of concern and were at the core of the ideological debate of all radical nationalist and socialist everywhere in Africa at the time and despite 30 years, are still core issues today. At the time however Dakar and Dar were moving against the established trend of most African countries by providing a conducive and legitimate environment for these issues to be discussed freely and to be held as possible alternatives to the then existing forms of under-development and the emerging social and cultural forms of dependence in African countries. In Tanzania, the Arusha Declaration provided the moral and political legitimacy for the now famous radicalism of the Dar es Salaam University. And it was scholars from Dar who had very intensive contacts with IDEP and through it with the University of Dakar, who were deeply involved with Samir Amin and others in the transformation of the old COD to the new COD.

When therefore the new COD was formed on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1973, its fundamental mission, which could not at the time, be stated in its constitution or other formal documents, was that it would further a radical and critical social science – a social science which would focus on the issues raised by the Arusha Declaration. These issues were not new and several well known writers - Fanon, Nkrumah, Amin and others - had written and advocated them earlier in the sixties. But the importance of the Arusha Declaration was that it was a manifesto of an African nationalist political party which was in power and which began to implement policies within the framework of the Declaration. It thus gave legitimacy not only to the principles behind the Declaration, not only to openly discuss these as respected principles, but it provided an alternative model of development which claimed to be specifically suitable to the poor agrarian societies of Africa. At the same time it offered a better vision of a possible future for a largely peasant society. Furthermore, in terms of the international environment of the time, Tanzania was not a communist country and therefore the Declaration could not easily be dismissed as “communist propaganda”.

The new COD's objectives as envisaged by its key founders were that COD will be an Institution in which (a) African researchers would develop a social science whose approach to the African reality and condition would bring about fundamental change based on similar principles and framework as those outlined in the Arusha Declaration; *this would therefore be a relevant and radical African social science* (b) this change in thinking and approach would necessarily entail rejecting and critiquing Western establishment social science which has legitimized a type of developmentism whose effect was the deteriorating economic conditions of the African people; (c) would advocate for an alternative self reliant and internally generated development model based on social justice and equity; (d) the African social science community would play an important political role to bring about changes in African countries from their Western and failing development model to an alternative model as advocated by COD's researchers. These objectives were to guide the work of COD. The interpretation of these objectives would thus form the basis of an internal COD debate between the Secretariat and the EC, between them and the researchers and more particularly amongst the researchers themselves.

By 1975, a new fulltime ES had been appointed and COD had settled its internal crises; the issue of the "distorted direction" was taken up as a first and immediate challenge. By 1976 at the second GA meeting, the President of COD reinterpreted the formal COD objectives those stated in the Statutes.

The President's interpretation shifted, imperceptibly, the focus and emphases from the political use of social science and political role of researchers to bring about changes in countries to that of focussing on the social science itself and the social science community.

Despite this shift in interpretation, in practice COD continued to interpret its mission on the basis of the basic principles stated earlier. Namely (i) the twin process of mobilizing researchers and of Africanising social science, (ii) promoting alternative model of development, (iii) advocating a political role for the research community to bring about changes in governments.



**How far therefore has COD succeeded in achieving these objectives?**

**It would be unscientific and unfair to judge COD's achievements or failure without relating its development and its activities to the economic, political and ideological environment in Africa and globally, since the late seventies. For COD, like any other institution was also influenced by the wider forces operating in the continent and internationally, despite its strong and steadfast commitment to its principles and objectives.**

### **The Changing International-African Environment 1973-2003**

**The second half of the seventies was characterised by the following factors which had direct bearing if not impact on COD.**

- 1. The establishment of CERDAS by UNESCO 1972-1975 as a competitor to COD.**
- 2. The entrenchment of the one party political system in most African countries and the frequent military coups. One consequence being the oppression of various sectors of the population including intellectuals – especially University researchers;**
- 3. The steep deterioration of the economies of most countries and their increased indebtedness. Some important consequences are the increased poverty, the serious deterioration of Universities and RI, the production of graduates who could not find jobs and also the second generation academics, as well as the beginning of the brain drain.**
- 4. Adedeji's forecast that African countries will be poorer at the end of the century than they were in the sixties. The Logos Plan of Action was the African reaction to the economic crises.**

**The decade of the eighties saw further deterioration in both the economic and political conditions of most African countries.**

- 5. The decade started with the Berg Report and subsequent direct interventions of the Breton Woods Institutions in the management of African economies through SAPs.**

6. **The collapse of the institutions of higher education, health systems, welfare and the steep rise in poverty – the “bread riots”; the intensification of the brain drain and the production of the third generation academics;**
7. **The mass protest for political reforms throughout the continent;**
8. **The assumption of the Breton Woods institutions of the role of dominant producers of knowledge on all aspects of the continent - a serious development since they had the power of coercing African governments, of killing some higher education institutions and creating new ones of their own etc. This new force was and is in addition to the traditional Western institutions of higher education and research, which continued to play their traditional role of entrenching conventional social science in African countries. Consequently the total dominance of World Bank approach in Government and even in conventional social science used in RI, Universities and the new WB supported Centres.**
9. **The weakening of the Soviet Union.**

**The decade of the nineties started with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the first military success of the new liberal imperialism in Gulf War 1, the consequent euphoria of the West, the emergence of the American unipolar world, the strengthening of the Breton Woods institutions, the recognition of the power of “globalisation” being driven by the Western powers and the consequence ideological dominance of liberalism and free market economics. With regards to Africa, this international environment manifested itself in**

10. **the introduction of political conditional ties – particularly the WB technicist definition of good governance**
11. **the formal acceptance of most African countries of pluralism and winner takes all electoral system. Their institutionalization was and still is a difficult process – there was and still is strong reluctance from governments**
12. **the high level coordination between donors and the Breton Woods institutions on their programmes, aid, the debt issue, and their selective approval or disapproval of the evolving political systems in African countries**
13. **the continuation of the SAPs and its conditional ties,**

14. the emergence and strengthening of WB supported capacity building and research institutions and the demise of some of the African built higher education institutions
15. the emergence of consultancy as an important industry for the production of short pieces of papers by scholars requested and customized for the demands of the donor community, the private sector, Governments, the UN Agencies and the Breton Woods intuitions
16. the rise and support by the donors of a large number of NGOs and CSOs to undertake all kinds of activities - to replace traditional Government function, to be watchdog on government, and to legitimize a new form of “developmentism” which focuses on small projects and away from major and strategic state supported development programmes on industrialization etc.
17. the second and third generation academics becoming numerically dominant members of COD’s constituency.

The twenty first century international environment continued the trend of deepening globalizations and the open manifestations of its unequal impact – the winners and losers.

But the euphoria and the apparently calm international situation was jolted by the 9/11 incident in NY. This incident then provoked the New Liberal Imperialism to come out into the open - exhibiting all the basic features of fascism - aggressive, militaristic, racist , disregard to international law, suppression of human rights, discarding multilateralism and contempt for the United Nations.. These features of the NLI are openly exhibited in a milder form in the United States and Europe, but openly in the Third World e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine. In Africa most government have been forced to adopt the Patriotic Act as *their* “terrorism act”. And so the democratic gains of the African people achieved in the nineties have been essentially wiped out by the American’s Patriotic Act. More importantly the Act in addition to being used to oppress opposition to governments is specifically being used to encourage religious conflict amongst the African people – between Christians and Muslim. However one of the few hopeful signs from this depressing development is the worldwide people’s

opposition (including in the US itself but more so in Europe) to this new imperial order as imposed by American policies.

Briefly and randomly ordered, these were the dominant features of the African and the global system since the late seventies to the present. COD developed under these circumstances and in response to the changing environment from one decade to the next. Understanding this broad context in which COD was operating will enable us to be more objective in trying to assess its success or failure in achieving its fundamental mission.

### A Preliminary Assessment

Over the thirty years of its existence COD has been very successful in the following areas:-

Firstly as an institution it has survived for three decades by overcoming many difficulties including two serious crises. Physically it has also expanded beyond recognition from its early days.

Secondly it has expanded its programmes – research, capacity building programmes, and publications - to a level and extent which has made it the premier social science institution in Africa.

Thirdly it has mobilized a sizeable section of the African social science research community – old and young, male and female – to a point that the COD constituency has become a powerful force within the African social science community in African Universities and RI.

We thus salute and celebrate COD's success in these three areas.

However we need to take a closer look at key objectives of the original mission – namely (a) the africanisation/indiginisation and relevance of social science, (b) providing governments with alternative models of development and convincing them to accept these models, (c) creating and mobilizing a committed social science community to play a political role aimed at influencing governments to adopt alternative development strategies which will improve the living conditions of the African people. What therefore is COD's performance with regards to these objectives?

Between 1975 and 1980 COD was convinced that the only appropriate and relevant approach for analyzing and understanding African societies was through the framework of critical social science. Additionally social science researchers followers of COD were expected to play an important role in bringing about this change. But what did this mean in practice? What exactly was critical social science? And how can researchers bring about such significant political change in government development strategies?

COD's critical social science rejected the establishment conventional social science which it severely criticized. But beyond the critique, was critical social science another name for Marxism? Or another name for Political Economy approach? The issue of clarifying and defining critical social science was thus an important challenge. And the challenge was taken up by some of the key figures directly involved in COD and those who were its strong supporters. More than twenty articles/papers were written during this period discussing the role of critical social science in development and the role the social scientists ought to play in bringing about change for the better. Thus by 1978, COD published an important paper in *Africa Development* (Vol. III, No.4) which it considered as its manifesto "Social Sciences and the Development Crises in Africa: Problems and Prospects" (authored by a group composed of Amin, Bujra, Thandika, Atta-Mills and Hamid).

The authors ask a basic question. "Given the dismal performance of Africa's so-called economic development and the consequent serious social and political problem facing African countries, we have to ask the question, "What role have African social scientists played in the last 15 to 20 years in relation to this so-called development process in Africa?" Have they for example played a role of providing scientific legitimacy to what is presently called development in Africa? Or on the other hand have they contributed to the understanding of the deeper forces behind the present crises and its consequences?"

The authors or the manifesto then proceeds to point out that conventional social science has brought about the serious crises in African countries and it has failed to predict the crises. Furthermore, it has given very unsatisfactory explanation as to why the crises has come about - namely (i) deteriorating terms of international trade, (ii) high birth rate in African

countries, (iii) mismanagement and corruption. In the view of the authors of the manifesto, this is an unacceptable explanation.

In contrast to the above “explanations” of the development crises, the few scientists undertaking critical research have for sometime given a different explanation. They have pointed out that, (a) the model of development itself is inappropriate for Africa because its beneficiaries are the foreign firms and the small ruling classes in Africa and its victims the majority of our people; (b) that our ruling classes have failed to change the distorted inherited economy – either by revolutionary method or even through reformism – because they did not (and from the vantage point of their class interests had every reason not to) involve the people in the political system and their participation at all levels of decision-making. Thus the acceptance of the model of development (described earlier) by the ruling nationalist elites after independence was simply an expression of the implicit alliance between them and the foreign firms. Ironically the “development” which logically resulted from this model, has led to the present crisis, which in addition to marginalizing the poor majority is now failing to sustain the ruling classes themselves (because the African economies are in crises). This explanation, based on the analyses of the internal social structure of African countries, has been advocated by a few of our critical researchers for some time now, but as is to be expected, without heed.

### Critical Social Science-Indiginisation

As early as 1978, COD had therefore clarified to the researchers the approach of critical social science, and that it expected the researchers to use this approach in all their research. The difference between critical social science and Marxism or Political Economy was, according to the manifesto, an academic issue over which they were not concerned. This ambiguity as to whether critical social science was distinct and based on a different paradigm from Marxism or Political Economy, this ambiguity has remained until today. However, critical social science as described by the manifesto has largely been the approach used by the majority of COD researchers until the present.

But the debate over whether critical social science would be a better framework for understanding African societies and whether it needs to be Africanized or indigenised, continued. Indeed over the years CODESRIA has claimed that it has been developing a uniquely relevant and African perspective to Africa's development problems, a perspective which is different from and has gone beyond that of the perspective of the various Marxist tendencies and the Dependencia approach. And it is this claim which constitutes CODESRIA's definition of indigenisation of social science i.e. it has developed a perspective which is different from Marxism, Political Economy and the Dependencia schools of social science in Africa. Needless to say this claim is contested by the Marxist and the Political Economists, both Africans and foreigners.

In 1993, CODESRIA's case on indigenisation was well articulated by its Executive secretary.

“There were many facets to the process of indigenization. The simplest one simply involves indigenization of personnel involved in research. The second followed from the old age injunction “know thyself” and gave primacy to knowledge of Africa. The third involved the problem of reconciling the ‘universal’ with the specificity of the African experience. In the process, African social science had to overcome many problems. One of these was the burden of received knowledge. Most of the social scientist have been trained abroad and had learnt to see Africa through certain intellectual prisms of vantage points. And even those who had not studied abroad were victims of the same problem that often resulted in mimetism in scholarship, a situation decried at many conferences (CODESRIA 1993)

The differences between African and foreign scholars over the interpretation of the African experience, has, in the final analysis tended to define CODESRIA 's perspective and therefore what constitutes indigenization of social science. Briefly these differences are over a number of critical issues, such as:

- *Foreign scholars excessive focus of there analysis on the African state. African states are pictured either as having done nothing wrong, or that everything they did was bad.*
- *During the eighties and nineties, most foreign scholars accepted the view ‘that both the diagnosis and the prescription of the international financial institutions on Africa were essentially correct’.*

- *A third area of the difference was the practice of many foreign Africanist to use African examples as a 'case study' to fit their theoretical construct.*

In 1992 Archie Mafeje described the essential elements of indigenization of social science in his study of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms of East Africa (CODESRIA Books,1991). Mafeje's aim in this study was to reconceptualise, from the existing ethnography, the concept of African social formation. He argued that the essential elements of indigenisation of social science in Africa are:-

First and foremost is the idea that each region has its own 'historical specificity' or 'experience' without refusing to be 'analytically universal'.

Secondly African social phenomena and social relations have been approached and analyzed in particular way by non-Africans and thereby creating serious misconception. This is attributed to an "inarticulation between universal language, as is employed in the social sciences and derived from European historical experience, and vernacular, as is experienced and understood by the Africans themselves.....what is at issue here is the authenticity of social science text" (p.9).

Thirdly the African experience needs to be 'decoded' and interpreted through an:

"appreciation of what is involved contextually' i.e. understanding the context of the social phenomena and social relations. Nothing is self-evident. Hence the demand that the analysis be informed by local expertise in order for it to be 'endowed' with greater validity and objectivity. From the point of view of social theory, this involves a process of sifting, discarding and recasting" (p.9)

Fourthly, deep local expertise and knowledge of the vernacular often lead to different interpretation of social relations and phenomenon, since the same social categories such as 'class' need not behave the same way everywhere in the world'.

"I deliberately avoided all this. Using discursive method, I allowed myself to be guided by the African ethnographies themselves. In trying to decode them, all pre-existing concepts became suspect and were subject to review. In the process a number of epistemological assumption, including Marxist ones, ceased to be self-evident and became objects for intellectual labour'. 'Having deciphered the chosen African ethnographies, I felt that I was in a position to evaluate



them from inside outwards, i.e. towards the wider social environment, for example, colonial capitalism and struggles against imperialist domination” (preface)

How far has Mafeje’s approach been mainstreamed in COD’s critical social science? If it has not, can COD claim to have developed its own Pan-African paradigm of social sciences with definite political, ideological philosophical values, as was claimed by Wamba Dia Wamba?

In 1993, CODESRIA was clearly definitive with its claim that its perspective constitutes indigenization. This confidence is reflected in the very euphoric view of CODESRIA President in his opening address to the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CODESRIA. He states:

*“ Very briefly we can say that the result of CODESRIA 20 years of work] constitute an emerging pan-African paradigm of social sciences with increasingly definite political values, ideological values, philosophical values and creatively drawing on the previously produced scientific forces. It took a multidimensional battle, in a very difficult and hostile environment, against received knowledge and values and power relations sustaining it. The number of the social scientists involved in this movement has increased considerably. It is one requirement to make the CODSRIA paradigm a normal one for social science in Africa. It is a healthy sign of this paradigm that it allows intense theoretical and methodological debates on the kinds of entities (ontology) being in the explanation of social formation; on ways of knowing Africa and the logical structures of produced theories. Quite a number of researchers (Africans and non-Africans) have been forced to wake up from their paradigmatic slumber”.*

As is to be expected, outside CODESRIA ‘community’, specifically amongst those adherents of conventional social science, there are doubts about COD’s achievement precisely on this issue. The most negative view of this comes from two Swedes, who say that ‘the early attempts, of which CODESRIA was an important part, to create an indigenous alternative to the prevailing ‘mainstream’ paradigms (read – conventional social science paradigm) in social science are largely reckoned to have failed, as witnessed by the rise and subsequent declined of various ‘dependency’ and neo-Marxist current’ (Vylder and Ornas 1990). Despite this misgiving, most COD researchers would accept (with some reservations) the above claim made by Wamba Dia Wamba as President of COD, in 1993.

In the second half of the nineties, COD slipped from its traditional path and for a brief period was infatuated with the post modernism School - a slippage which would have changed COD and turned it into the old COD – an institution providing legitimacy to the Developmentism of the Breton Woods institutions.. It is hoped that henceforth, COD will continue in its intellectual struggle to find its own distinct paradigm but which will not abandon the essential and core objective of COD that its social science is an instrument in the struggle to bring about better conditions for the African people.

This brings me to the final issue which is on *policy research* – COD as a think tank to governments on alternative models of development – and the political role of researchers to make governments change their strategies and accept the advice from COD.

### Politics a Policy Research: Political Role of COD and Researchers

“When COD was founded in the early seventies, there was a strong belief amongst its founders that the process of socio-economic development in Africa being implemented by governments, could be influenced and oriented towards egalitarian goals through a strong radical progressive social science. And COD would soon become the vehicle for this effort” (Bujra, An Evaluative Reflection on the Evolution of COD).

According to the COD manifesto of 1978, African researchers, as intellectuals, were viewed as a social group with a particular position in society and therefore they could play an important social and political role.

“As a group of intellectuals, whose economic position is basically at the same level as that of the ruling classes in our societies, and as a group which has strong and diverse linkages with the ruling classes, our role in the development of the present crises is complicated and therefore needs serious examination and analyses.”

However, there are many of us, who, though have extensive contact with the ruling classes and whose economic position is quite high, nevertheless have become disillusioned by the conventional social science research because of the present crisis and because of our deep-seated sentiment for the improvement of the economic and social conditions of the poor. For those of us who belong to this tendency, the present crisis offers an important occasion not only to support critical research, but also to look more carefully beyond the critique, to look

seriously at the alternatives to the present crises”. (Social Science and the Development Crises: Problems and Perspectives: (AD. Vol. III. No.4 p.38/39).

Clearly researchers were expected to play a more practical role than mere intellectuals who teach and write papers and books. Yet the manifesto comes out with a surprising statement such as “We should not delude ourselves into thinking that intellectual perception, and not social forces, determines history. We believe, however, that intellectual endeavours interact with social forces and may influence them in certain crucial moments” (p.42) Hence, according to the early vision of COD research can play a political role by joining social movements in their societal order to bring about social change.

In general the relationship between CODESRIA as an institution and the African governments has always been delicate and ambivalent. When it was founded CODESRIA had thought of itself as the Pan-Africa ‘think tank’ on development issues, with an obligation to help African governments with advise based on its research expertise and collective wisdom. At the same time, CODESRIA has always been a consistent critique of government development policies, and many of the participating researchers in CODESRIA activities are often well-known critique of their government. Thus despite CODESRIA’s self assigned role as a ‘think tank’, most Africa government have kept a polite distance from CODESRIA, while a few have expressed open hostility. Indeed the optimistic assumption of the founders that CODESRIA could influence government policy, was at best unrealistic and at worst an illusion. It was soon abandoned.

CODESRIA literature was dominated by an advocacy for equity in the distribution of national resources, participation of poorer classes in decision-making and at various levels of economic management, and full democratization of the political process. It also carried out consistent attacks on corruption, bad governance and state oppression. Given the advocacy of these ideas by CODESRIA, and the environment of government policy and decision-making, it is not surprising that CODESRIA has made little impact on policies made by the states.

Clearly this question is complicated and cannot be addressed fully here. As CODESRIA began to realize its impotence to directly influence policies of the African

governments, it entered into a period of serious soul searching on this question. The shredding of the interface between research and policy making the apparent impotence of the social scientists in face of serious political, social, and economics crises were a source of considerable soul searching among the social science community. In the end CODESRIA decides that the ‘consumers’ of policy –oriented research were not only states or donors, but society at large and that the state’s view of ‘policy-oriented’ research was research which they could only digest. It was, therefore, important that research results be accessible to a large community and that influencing the thinking and perception of the main social actors, including those outside the state was an important contribution to the process of policy making in Africa ‘. Thus on the basis of experience, CODESRIA felt it stood a better chance of influencing civil society with its ideas on development policies, than the states themselves. CODESRIA therefore shifted its target to civil society. It is thus important to note that today CODESRIA no longer claims that its research output is aimed at influencing government policies, as it did in its first brochure, but rather that its target is to influence the wider society (civil society), through the social science community; and in an ideal democratic society, civil society would in turn affect the policies of the government. This position is supported by an experienced social scientist who for many years has been involved in both policy making and trying to influence government policies. He argues that:

- *African social scientists need to exploit more effectively the opportunities brought about by the pressure to democratize and open up African scientist for greater degree of participation, transparency and accountability in order to make more meaningful contribution to policy making. It is important to stress here that policy-oriented research is not only meaningful for and should not be directed only to governments. Parliamentarians, people’s organizations (trade unions, women, youth and grassroots organization etc.) and NGOs have greater need for policy research not only to help them shape their own policies and decisions, but also assist them in influencing the process of national policy making. They are part of civil society and of the forces of social and economic change (Rasheed 1993:29)*

## **Concluding Remarks**

In my view there has been a perceptible shift in what I can only call “mission focus”. In the original vision, COD was envisioned as an instrument aimed at bringing about definite political change in Government’s development strategies through the impact of both COD’s research and also through the political activities of COD’s researchers. COD was thus in perpetual struggle to bring about political change

This vision of COD has now changed and it seems to me that COD is now seen as an instrument of strengthening critical social science itself and to expand its social science community base. Beyond the research community, its main target has now shifted to civil society rather than governments. COD is still in perpetual struggle but in order to become a mainstream institution which is a bit more radical than its counterpart mainstream conventional institutions.

Why did this shift take place? In my view the shift is the result of the incredible pressure on CODESRIA from the adverse, deteriorating and changing global and African environment. It was perhaps the only way that CODESRIA could survive and indeed fulfill some very important and needed functions during the dark days of the last two decades. What kinds of changes will the new and worse global environment – under the hegemony of the New Liberal Imperialism – force CODESRIA to make, is something that the leadership of CODESRIA has to watch very carefully.

## **CODESRIA’s Challenges: Preparing for the Future.**

The challenges facing COD are enormous since it has just come out of a difficult crises. It has already started the process of renewal which is going well as this 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference and celebrations indicate. Nevertheless, there are, in my view, a few challenges which COD’s leadership need to face and think through as soon as possible.

First and most important challenge is for COD to recognize and think through the fact that for 30 years COD has been totally dependent on funding from outside Africa. The fact that there are no serious move or plans which I know of, to drastically change this situation, is

at the minimum a serious lack of foresight. This is a situation which is contrary to its core principle – that it expects African Governments to be self reliant. This is a situation which could one day haunt CODESRIA. I sincerely hope that it will not come about.

Secondly, COD should also recognize the dramatic changes which have taken place in the global system as well as in its constituency – the African social science community. It must study both forces carefully, understand their dynamics and then develop its short and medium term strategies. This is an urgent task and in my view should be done as soon as possible.

Thirdly it is very important for COD not to assume that it is immune from crises and slippage. There is no guarantee that the last crises could not happen again in the near future. The only way to avoid similar crises is to have a deeper understanding of the internal forces within the research community – the COD constituency.

Fourthly COD should enhance its role as a pan-African Center of Excellence in its own right, based on its principles, approach and vision of Africa. As an alternative Center of Excellence, it must engage the AU and African Governments in order to advocate its alternative development strategies and policies based on its vision. It should not let this field to be entirely monopolized by the WB and its Centers of Excellence such as the ECA and others.

Fifthly there are important issues in the current African scene that need an explanation. For example the Museveni phenomenon – a revolutionary product of the Dar school who used to call all of us as wishy-washy socialist. Museveni led a movement that overthrew a dictatorial government and became Head of State for the last twenty years. Recently in an address to the Media Group, at Press Club, in the US, Museveni made the following statement “Can Africa produce its own Economic Tigers? The answer is Yes, and Africa would have done so in the 1960s had it not been for the ideological confusion of our leaders then. Our leaders opted for a sort of socialism that interfered with the operations of the private sector; that really was the biggest mistake. They nationalized private companies; nationalization means you make public what is private by Law, by confiscation. That was the big mistake of our leaders in the 1960s. ( Museveni Address to The Media Group, Can Africa Produce Her Economic Tigers?, Washington DC, 7 November 2003). He is also reported to have said that investors in Uganda “should not be touched even when they mistreat workers. We need growth”! He has recently been described as “A revolutionary lion turned into a

**Bushbaby". Museveni is not alone. There is a class behind him. How do we explain the fact that Uganda under Museveni did not change into a country with an alternative development model - something approaching what COD has been advocating?**

**Similarly how do we explain developments in post-Nyerere Tanzania?**

**In fact almost all African countries are now more strongly tied to peripheral capitalist development and as a marginal region of the global system than they were in the seventies. And NEPAD as Africa's reaction to globalization and Africa's underdevelopment, is a far cry from the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA). Have we retrogressed?**

**Are we silently admitting that global forces are too strong for Africa, that they have created some strong allies in African countries and that together they have stopped any possibility of African countries to have an alternative development from that set to it by the global capitalist forces?**

**If COD cannot bring about changes it had advocated in the past, and I hope is still advocating in African countries, than for the sake of its own integrity and credibility, it must explain why it has not succeeded or why others also have not succeeded.**