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ESTADO E SOCIEDADES AFRICANAS PERANTE O NEXO SEGURANÇA E DESENVOLVIMENTO.

Ulrich Schiefer[©]

ulrich.schiefer@gmail.com

The Quest for Impact

The cumulative effect of all intervention, understood in its widest sense, provides the external conditions of the dynamics of African Agrarian societies. The quest for impact of development and humanitarian intervention complements the quest for resources (mineral, natural, and agricultural) for which outflows have to be organised, while at the same time trying to stem the outflows of human beings (and encouraging backflows of migrants and remittances). The resulting triple impact leads to the assisted self-destruction of many African societies manifest in the fields of production, socialisation and self-organisation. Important parts of African studies, unfortunately, are still dominated by analytical perspectives which accompany specific interventions, (be that policies, programmes or projects) or look only at specific sectors. This is like trying to analyse a game of chess by just looking at one or two pieces. This is damaging as well as dangerous, especially if other actors play Go.

Triple impact, External intervention, Assisted self-destruction.

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African Agrarian societies are confronted by a wide array of external interventions which can be analysed as loose bundles of inflows which only in parts are reciprocated by bundles of outflows. Together the inflows and outflows condition the internal dynamics of African societies in ways which often surpass and in many cases contradict the stated or intended interventions.

The power of specific bundles of inflows also conditions the overwhelming part of research about African societies. Research, even the parts that are not applied research funded by specific interests, is often undertaken in the perspective of individual or bundles of flows. It follows waves and fashions, as do many of the most well-known currents. These conditions for research are material, financial, scientific, methodological and technical. Most of the research reflects the needs to keep different streams flowing or to increase them. It is very difficult to develop a perspective that takes more than one bundle of flows into consideration. Even specific bundles rarely get into the picture which is usually highly fragmented. The impacts the different bundles of flows produce require, however, an encompassing perspective that takes into account all significant flows. Therefore it seems necessary to look at the interaction of different bundles of flows and to study, e. g. the interaction, overt or not, between say security intervention, development aid, political, religious, cultural and humanitarian intervention, as well as legal and illegal trade, war and migration.

The interactions of these different flows happen in a “grey zone” and are neither well studied nor properly understood. They are in a smaller part conditioned by the dynamics of African societies (for example war or peace; natural resources or not). Taken as a whole the flow dynamics are, however, mostly conditioned by the overall dynamics of their origins which are also highly fragmented.

The power difference between the societies of origin and the “target societies” becomes manifest in the direction, nature, content, volume and frequency of the different flows. Another factor to condition the flows and their interactions are the apparatuses that organize them.

The cumulative impacts of the inflows as well as the outflows on many African Agrarian societies seem to produce more negative than positive dynamics. These can be seen in many different areas.

One nearly ubiquitous phenomenon is the extraversion of African elites which are more interested in partaking in the inflows than in increasing their productive capacities. As this extraversion is multi-dimensional the “rent-seeking” metaphor seems too short.

The loss of productive capacity of African agrarian societies is manifest. Given the absence of industrial production (exception: extractive industries) the growing urbanisation and the implied rural-urban migration result in a reduction of the productive capacity of

agricultural production and the growing loss of food security of the cities as well as in the countryside.

The national, international and intercontinental migration flows are accompanied not only by a loss of productivity but also by a loss the societies' capacity of socialisation, that is, the passing on of productive, reproductive and organisational knowledge of agrarian societies. As there exist no productive structures in the cities to re-assemble the "liberated" elements of the agrarian societies in a new productive context, growing parts of the urban societies are forced to "recycle" inflows and are ever more dependent on the stability of these inflows which are, however, becoming more and more instable.

This increase overall instability in many areas and reduces governability of many societies and forces many societies into a downward spiral. The dynamics of downward spirals of societies are not yet very well understood. Even less understood are their interactions which are crucial, especially when taking into account the self- and mutually reinforcing nature of some of them, which lead to an acceleration of the underlying processes.

We have no understanding yet of the transport of energy, information and material between different flows (individual or grouped) on one hand; on the other we do not yet understand the interaction between different processes of disintegration or collapse of African societies and their relationship to inward or outward bound flows. Linear causal models do not seem adequate – neither for analysis nor for intervention.

The interaction between different spheres becomes more visible in circumstances where external and internal parameters undergo rapid and significant changes. Currently some basic changes can be observed in the areas of food (in)security, migration and security. Changes in these areas do interact – although it is far from clear in which way and with which consequences.

We do not yet understand time lags of parameter changes. How long does it take, for example, until the increase in basic foodstuffs provokes political unrest? How long does it take for agrarian societies to respond to price changes of their products? What is the resilience of agrarian societies to changes in the security situation?

A very curious and significant phenomenon is the influence of future events on the behaviour of societies or parts of societies. This goes far beyond expectations and hopes or fears. At present, ever more agrarian societies respond to the real and perceived changes in food security by activating old and well practised behaviours. Besides activating the time honoured coping strategies they are getting ready for migration or they are forcibly uprooted by changes in the security situation. The population movements lead to a further decline of productivity of the respective societies. When studying migrations and their impact it seems

important not only to look at the successful migrations. The failed migrations look like having even greater impacts on their societies of origin.

External interventions in the area of security which are bound to increase and to submit other areas of directed interventions, contribute to an overall increase of the destructive potential of societies.

It is to be expected that interventions directed at societal change will decrease in Sub-Saharan Africa while interventions to augment the external access and control of natural resources will increase.

The appearance of new international models of intervention which seem based on a long term strategy will certainly condition other types of intervention. The continent wide establishment of bilateral political relationships, smoothed by (superficially) unconditional but substantial credits, which open access to markets, to key sectors of the economy (construction etc.) and to the control of extractive industries as well as of land heralds the advent of a new strategic approach which puts a question mark to directed interventions which, at least rhetorically subscribe to democracy and human rights.

While this approach may stabilize some political regimes for some time, it is highly doubtful that it will be able to reverse the negative spirals which signify the disintegration of African agrarian societies.