

How to build a strong knowledge commons: learning from CODESRIA under structural adjustment

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Introduction

The period of structural adjustment across African societies marked a period of economic collapse that has been characterised as deeper and longer lasting than the American Great Depression (Meagher 2019). Intellectual communities could not emerge unscathed. Indeed, there is an established body of work documenting how structural adjustment undercut the material basis of the academic project in Africa. Universities' capacity for research declined significantly. Scholars left the continent en masse and serious postgraduate training came to a halt. Academic journals and publishers folded, and book famines became commonplace across the continent.

But little is known about how some African intellectual communities *endured*. While many other scholarly organisations declined or collapsed,¹ the Council for the Development of Social Science Research (CODESRIA) managed to retain much of its intellectual vibrancy and institutional health. Conceptualised in 1964 and formalised as an organisation in 1973, CODESRIA is the longest-standing pan-African intellectual organisation on the continent.

How did CODESRIA manage to weather the storms of structural adjustment? Answering this question matters, because it helps us understand how we can build intellectual communities that are resilient, that are able to navigate the multiplying uncertainties of a world in crisis. This case study draws on interviews with 28 intellectuals and officers in CODESRIA, archival material and bibliometric data to explore this question. Since it is a fundamentally comparative question, the narrative in this paper is necessarily partial and incomplete.

This enquiry is part of a broader study which examines three inter-related debates: the different meanings of pan-Africanism in CODESRIA, African feminists' struggles to change CODESRIA, and the subject of this paper: CODESRIA's defence of the academic project under structural adjustment. These debates allow for an examination of the ways in which CODESRIA has been shaped by the interplay between the political and economic challenges facing African intellectuals on the one hand, and the realm of ideas on the other. It is this confluence of ideas and material factors which lies at the heart of conceptualising CODESRIA as a knowledge commons. A commons is a "resource shared by a group of people that is subject to social dilemmas, such that commons require strong collective-action and self-governing mechanisms" (Hess and Ostrom 2007, 3, 5). The basic characteristic that distinguishes commons from noncommons is "institutionalized sharing of resources among members of a community" (Madison, Frischmann,

¹ Such as the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS), the Association of African Political Science, and the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD).

and Strandburg 2010, 841). For commons scholars, when communities create intellectual resources, they can draw on these resources to design new institutions that lead out of the path dependency of existing patterns of practice: they can change the rules of the game.

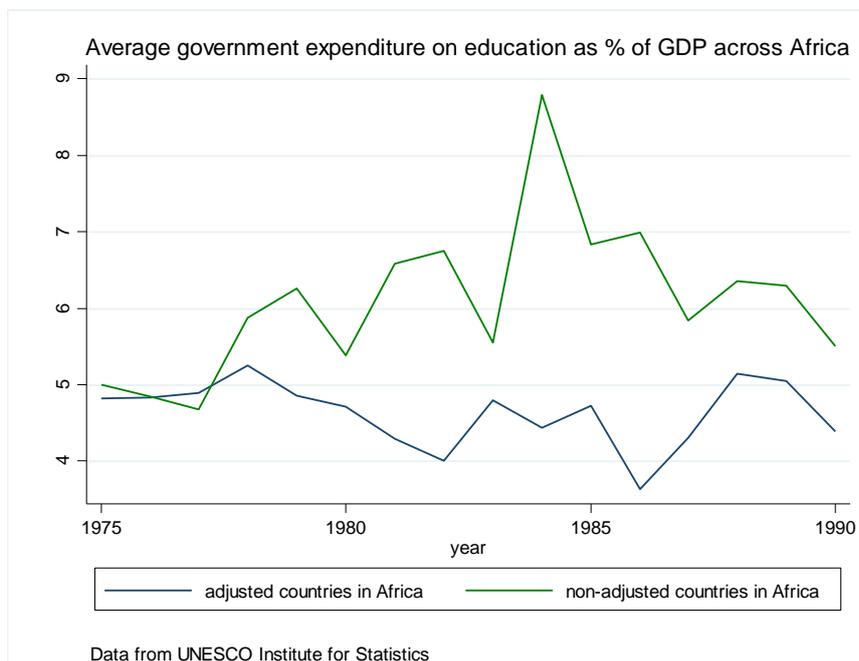
This paper is divided into three sections. The first section considers CODESRIA intellectuals' analyses of how adjustment impacted African societies' capacity for autonomous thought by destabilising their universities. The second section examines CODESRIA's organisational and intellectual efforts to combat the effects of adjustment on higher education, and how it changed as a consequence. And the third section explores the ways in which the impacts of adjustment on higher education shaped CODESRIA's governance and intellectual character. I argue that CODESRIA's analysis of structural adjustment led to considerable intellectual and organisational innovation, and it therefore grew in size and influence during this period. However, structural adjustment weakened the publicly-funded academic institutions upon which CODESRIA relied, and thereby eroded the mechanisms to maintain its intellectual vigour and democratic character over the long term. Yet, as I try to show, CODESRIA survived in part because, when faced with existential precarity, it chose to engage in intense collective introspection and deliberation. In doing so, it helped keep African intellectual traditions in trust for future generations, for a time when African universities were once again able to act as spaces for free thought.

1. CODESRIA's analysis of structural adjustment

Following the oil crisis and a series of droughts in the mid-1970s, African governments approached the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for emergency financing, which was provided on condition that they implement a package of wide-ranging economic reforms known as "structural adjustment." Between 1981 and 1989, 36 African countries had undergone at least one structural adjustment programme (Bujra 1994, 132). While adjustment was ostensibly designed to correct the weaknesses of African economies, the combined imposition of austerity, deregulation, tax cuts, and currency devaluations marked a period of wide-scale economic, political and social turmoil on the continent. By the end of the 1980s many countries had a lower GDP per capita than at independence (Fosu, Mlambo, and Oshikoya 2001). The majority of industries that had been established in the post-independence period had collapsed and economies had reverted to their colonial specialisations (Mkandawire 1988b). External debt (often to former colonial powers) had grown to the extent that a number of countries were classified as insolvent, and were forced to allocate the majority of their budget to

servicing debt (Elbadawi and Ndulu 1996). This was accompanied by a substantial reduction in spending on public goods, such as healthcare and education (see Figure 1 below). Widespread increases in malnutrition and mortality were often associated with heightened political crises and civil conflict as structural adjustment programmes further eroded the legitimacy of the state (Wamba-dia-Wamba 1992). By 1989, thirty-five of Africa’s forty-five independent states were under military rule (Mama 2006).

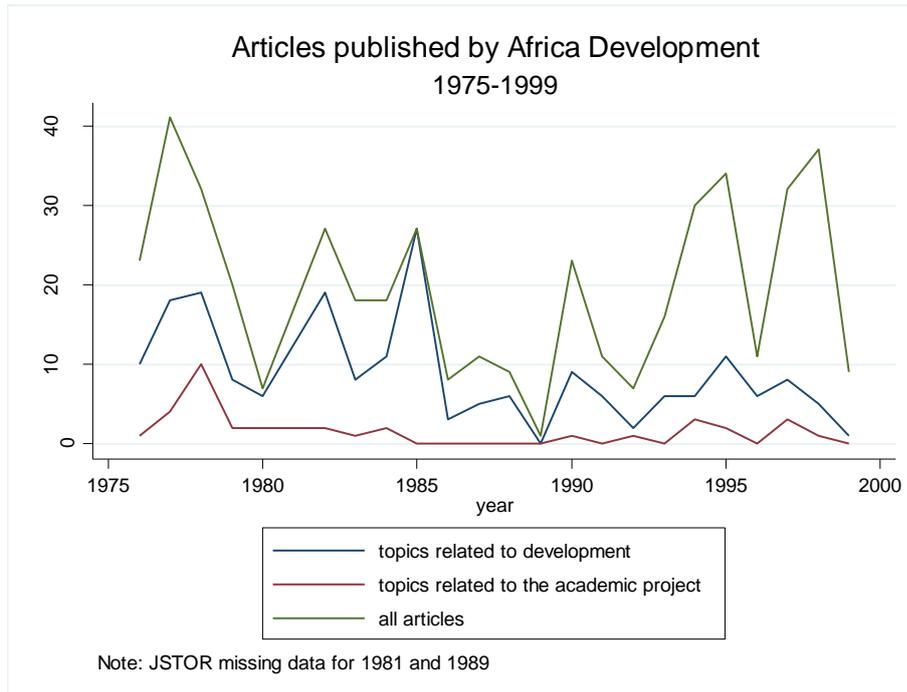
Figure 1: Changes in government spending on education for adjusted versus non-adjusted African countries



In the beginning, CODESRIA was primarily concerned with critiquing adjustment and its broader impact on African societies, to the extent that, as Fatou Sow (2016) observes, the Council became “specialists on structural adjustment policies.” It was only later that they began to pay concerted attention to the impacts of adjustment on the academic project.

This is clear in a meta-analysis of articles published in *Africa Development* between 1975 and 1999, which indicates that 200 articles, or 44%, have titles related to development. In comparison, 35 articles, or 8%, are related to the academic project (Figure 2 below). After 1990, the number of articles related to the academic project increases substantially. This suggests that the broader dynamics and impacts of structural adjustment were initially the main intellectual focus of CODESRIA’s community, and helped to frame their thinking about the academic project.

Figure 2: Thematic analysis of article titles from *Africa Development* (1976-1999)



CODESRIA’s analysis of adjustment began with a critique of the empirical and theoretical work underlying adjustment. But faced with international financial institutions that were unmoved by empirical evidence, scholars began paying closer attention to the process of research and policy formation underlying adjustment. They documented the ways in which programmes were typically designed and carried out by local and foreign elites who tended to resist the participation of African scholars. Ali (1994), for instance, chronicles the way in which Sudanese academics were repeatedly side-lined by the International Labour Organisation’s Mission to Sudan when they visited the country to help draw up a structural adjustment programme. After repeatedly pointing to empirical evidence that cast doubt on the underlying assumptions of the Mission’s project, Ali notes, Sudanese academics walked out in protest at the refusal of the Mission to take their objections into account. Attempts to bring the protest to public knowledge were censored, and the academics in question were subsequently blacklisted by donors. The irony of this situation, as Mkandawire (1988a, 2) points out, is that:

at the time when most African governments insisted on their national priorities there were few indigenous social scientists and most of the experts were expatriates who were not bound by national priorities. Now that Africa has large numbers of social scientists, African governments have lost a significant degree

of autonomy and in one way or another are pursuing objectives imposed by external financial institutions. Thus, two or three IMF experts sitting in a country's reserve bank have more to say about the direction of national policy than say, the national association of economists.

Scholars in CODESRIA stressed that this marginalisation of African research was part of the broader anti-democratic thrust of structural adjustment programmes, which were often presented as a *fait accompli* to parliament and public alike, with no scope for discussion or dissent (Mkandawire 1985; Diop 1991; Mphande 1994).

Thus, when CODESRIA commissioned thirty empirical studies on structural adjustment, the synthesis report by Mkandawire and Soludo (1999) found that one of the striking features of this era is the extent to which it was characterised by secrecy and confusion. The data underlying economic reforms, Mkandawire and Soludo observe, was seldom public or subject to peer review, and was often hopelessly out of date and riddled with errors (see also Bennell 1996). To make matters worse, World Bank and IMF reports often made inconsistent demands on African economies,² while issuing contradictory statements to the public.³ And yet, as Mafeje (1990a) remarks, African policy alternatives to structural adjustment were similarly unfettered by empirical rigour or the need to engage with state of the art African scholarship.⁴ In the resulting, “discourse of the blind”, as Hutchful (1995, 392) characterises it, “the side with the money usually won.”

Reflecting on this period, Mustapha (2012) argues that these poorly-informed attempts by a small band of elites to re-engineer African societies without their knowledge or consent undermined the political space for public deliberation and informed consensus building. And yet, he contends, such public deliberation is typically taken to be critical to the development of democratic states. Indeed, as Mkandawire and Soludo (1999, 47–48) remark, although the World Bank identified “public debate” and “transparency” as key elements of “good governance”, they viewed African civil servants as “corrupt, rent seeking and inefficient” and therefore kept them

² One such example is the World Bank's demand for rapid “liberalization, without any compensating source of revenue, [which] is likely to be inconsistent with [its] requirements to maintain fiscal discipline.” (Mkandawire and Soludo 1999, 97)

³ For instance, both the Nigerian government and the World Bank made public statements claiming that the Bank's concessionary loan to Nigerian universities “is a gift [with] no strings attached.” In reality, the loan involved a number of stringent conditions. (Imam and Mama 1994, 99)

⁴ In particular, feminist scholars critiqued both the Lagos Plan and the Berg Report for their erasure of women. Steady (1982) argues that informal regional integration had already been achieved by market women in West Africa; the failure of regional integration planning to take this into account would likely lead to forms of integration that were unsustainable and inequitable.

out of the restructuring exercise, a practice directly at odds with their emphasis on public debate and transparency. Mkandawire and Soludo argue that such practices help explain the poor quality of research and policy during this period, since key actors were inured from the checks and balances of building informed consensus within the broader scholarly and political communities of the continent. From this perspective then, confused policymaking is a function of secrecy, for which public deliberation is a necessary antidote. More broadly, it suggests that informed public deliberation is a critical ingredient in the political and economic flourishing of a society, and that scholars and intellectuals play an important role in informing public deliberation.

CODESRIA scholars' concerns about the impact of structural adjustment on the academic project were therefore informed by their understanding of the profound role that intellectual communities play in broader societal flourishing. As Zeleza (2003, 155) observes, much of the urgency and poignancy of their writings in this period derive from their intimate acquaintance with the ways in which the disintegration of the fabric of society necessarily involves an assault on a society's ability to think autonomously.

Between 1980 and 1990, CODESRIA's flagship journal, *Africa Development*, did not publish any articles dealing with the impact of structural adjustment on higher education, instead choosing to focus on the broader social and economic dimensions of adjustment. However, by the end of the 1980s the profound effects of these reforms on higher education had become too pressing to ignore. The first signs of change appeared in 1987 in CODESRIA's *Bulletin*, the organisation's newsletter and discussion forum, which published a piece by Mkandawire cautioning that the World Bank called for a reduction in spending on higher education in Africa (Mkandawire 1987). By the following year, in the 1988 General Assembly, Mkandawire used his position as Executive Secretary to draw attention to the disintegration of research infrastructure under structural adjustment:

Libraries are, as a result of the 'Book Hunger', collapsing; means for travel to carry out field work hardly exist and where they do exist, they are linked to some short term consultancy work for government or external agencies. Official institutions charged with the collection of national data – e.g. central statistical offices – are no longer able to keep their data up to date, either because of severe financial and personnel constraints or because of the primary given to the collection of data demanded by donors. (Mkandawire 1988a, 1)

Scholars in CODESRIA would come to identify two discrete rounds in the restructuring of African universities. In the first round, universities were subject to the same funding cuts that

other public sectors, such as healthcare, faced. While these funding cuts substantially weakened research infrastructure, the concomitant devaluation of currencies and increasing inflation meant that the purchasing power of salaries declined and many academics were forced into survivalist mode. The combination of these factors, CODESRIA scholars argued, eroded the material basis for African intellectual communities (Sawyer 1997; Sall 2003; Zeleza 2003; Olukoshi 2006).

The World Bank then conducted a second, more penetrating round of programmes, which aimed to reform the institutional structure of African universities. This round was ostensibly intended to help rebuild African universities. Officials at the World Bank had initially argued that the private rates of return to higher education were low relative to primary schooling; African countries should therefore scrap local universities and outsource experts from richer countries or train graduates overseas (Psacharopoulos 1982, 1988; World Bank 1988). But as Mamdani observes, when the World Bank proposed this at “a meeting with African vice-chancellors in Harare in 1986 ... [it recognised] that its call for a closure of universities was politically unsustainable; the Bank subsequently modified its agenda, calling for universities to be trimmed and restructured to produce only those skills which the market demands.” (Mamdani 1993, 10)

In return for earmarked funding then, the World Bank demanded that universities become more efficient.⁵ This conceptualisation of efficiency typically included a reduction in staff and the demand that universities begin to source revenue from extra-state actors, through tuition fees, university businesses and consultancies.⁶ One corollary of this was that universities were compelled to close down unprofitable courses and implement new courses that had greater market value. Furthermore, universities were only to purchase equipment from World Bank approved sources, such as the British Overseas Development Agency, while they would only be allowed to purchase books and journals sanctioned by the Bank. At the same time, upwards of ten percent of the loan would be used to top-up the salaries of expatriate staff (Bako 1990). In some cases, governments also used this as an opportunity to establish set curricula for all universities (Matlosa 1990; Imam and Mama 1994).

⁵ The World Bank’s position paper on African higher education identified the following inefficiencies: “First higher education is now producing relatively too many graduates of programmes of dubious quality and relevance and generating too little new knowledge and direct development support. Second, the quality of these outputs show unmistakable signs in many countries of having deteriorated so much that the fundamental effectiveness of the institutions is also in doubt. Third, the costs of higher education are needlessly high. Fourth, the pattern of financing higher education is socially inequitable and economically inefficient.” (World Bank 1988, 5)

⁶ In particular, the World Bank demanded that “radical measures [be implemented] to improve quality, reduce cost for each student and graduate, constrain output in fields that do not support economic development, and relieve the burden on public sources of financing by increasing the participation of beneficiaries and their families.” (World Bank 1989, 82)

Faced not only with an assault on livelihoods, but with the prospect that the World Bank would gain control over what people could read and teach, many universities became hotbeds of resistance to structural adjustment programmes, and wave after wave of staff and student strikes took place across the continent. In the late 1980s, the *Bulletin* began the important work of documenting university resistance against structural adjustment, and often published correspondence between university and government actors. In a number of these cases, while students and staff framed their political action as a form of resistance to austerity programmes by international financial institutions, states typically responded as though the strikes were an attack on the authority of the state. At Makerere, for instance, while academics called for “freedom of speech and freedom from hunger” (MUASA 1989), the government called staff strikes for a living wage “unpatriotic” and “criminal” (Government Cabinet of Uganda 1989). Similarly, the government of Lesotho claimed that academic strikes and student protests against structural adjustment verged on treason (Matlosa 1990). The *Bulletin's* work of documenting assaults on academic freedom were therefore important both in raising awareness and breaking the culture of silence and fear in African universities. As the Congolese scholar Nkashama (1991) explained in a letter to CODESRIA:

Do bear in mind, my friends, that nowhere is there any security for us. In the country, special airborne brigades are being parachuted on IPN and campuses with the mandate to ransack and kill. These death squadrons do not spare teachers ... In the face of this horrible nightmare, I have only these poor words to offer: break the wall of silence. Let us talk about our fear and then maybe this will give us the strength to act.

This hardened political environment, Mkandawire argues, reflected the crises of legitimacy that structural adjustment had catalysed in post-independence states:

Confronted with dwindling legitimacy in the eyes of their people and persuaded that foreign capital requires the ‘political will’ to impose unpopular adjustment policies, law and order, and a docile civil society, most African governments have resorted to direct repression. The effects on the social sciences are familiar enough – closure of universities, detentions, prohibition of publications, expulsion from countries, loss of jobs. (Mkandawire 1988a, 1)

In order to meet this perceived need for militarised responses to popular protest, CODESRIA scholars noted, states typically increased their security budgets and further deprioritised social spending on education and health (Campbell 1989; Bako 1990; Quist 1994). This enhanced the state's capacity for militarised responses to popular uprisings, while further narrowing the economic resources for university staff and students to organise. Thus, budgetary cuts did not only issue from the World Bank, but also often reflected government choices in the trade-off between militarisation and higher education. The militarisation of states therefore acted as both a catalyst and a constraint on democratic organising against structural adjustment across African campuses.

Government repression during this period was but one constraint on academic freedom. Interviewees also framed the erosion of the material basis for intellectual communities as an assault on academic freedom. As Alex Bangirana, a publications officer in CODESRIA commented:

Most of the institutions do not have enough money funded for research so really there is nothing to publish about you know, you cannot publish in ignorance. And the lack of funding of research therefore is actually a limitation on academic freedom to write and report exactly on what's happening. (Bangirana 2015)

More precisely, as Mkandawire argues, the consequence of publishing in ignorance was the emergence of “excessively descriptive” work, that was “no longer anchored in a theoretical framework [and therefore] remains poorly collected or marshalled. Under such conditions intellectual reflection is bound to be hampered by a sense of being engaged in what is an embarrassingly denuded intellectual life.” (1995, 80) The flipside of this, as another scholar in CODESRIA observed, was the penchant for excessively rhetorical work:

Any time you come here for the problem of Africa there are huge demands of problems and no real solution. Africa must do that, Africa must take her destiny – I mean when you listen to that – when a very delicate person like me listens to that, it's terrible. We will never overcome our problems, never. When you listen to all of these beautiful conferences, you become pessimistic ... Objectively we have to see a way out and secondly it is always the same sentences, the same formula, the same stereotype. (Bahi 2015)

However, funding cuts did not only limit the intellectual resources needed to conduct original empirical research informed by broader scholarly debates; they also led to the rationalisation of staff, forcing scholars to take on teaching loads that were too heavy to allow for meaningful research. As Ibrahim Oanda, the officer overseeing CODESRIA's higher education programme remarked:

And at most of the institutions most of what is happening is now teaching, about ninety percent ... the demand for teaching ... without commensurate funding for intellectual production, training of teachers and all that, it's actually become a huge impediment on academic freedom. Insofar as academic freedom would also mean that people engaged in very high teaching loads are not reporting or are writing from ignorance. (Oanda 2015)

These teaching burdens were exacerbated by World Bank demands that individual departments enter into competition with each other for student fees (rather than student fees accruing to the university as a whole). This meant that academics' livelihoods became dependent on the number of students they could teach, and therefore how many students they could attract to their courses. One of the implications of this was the rapid recruitment of part-time lecturers who were relatively cheaper given their lower qualifications, as well as the significant decline in less lucrative doctoral studies, so that the twin pressures of funding cut-backs and marketization lowered the academic competency of lecturers. In this regard, Ebrima Sall, the Executive Secretary at the time of this study, observed:

There is an acute shortage of qualified academics in most universities ... [they] are under-staffed or are inadequately staffed in the sense that you have a number of universities where you have very few people at the level of professor or even just holding PhDs, and that's very worrisome in the sense that it ends up leading to uncertain results to say the least." (Sall 2015)

At the same time, as several interviewees indicated, sheer over-work narrowed the time and resources that scholars had to forge intellectual connections within the university and between universities. This in turn had profound implications for scholarly production, as Mkandawire explained in his address to CODESRIA's General Assembly in 1988:

The general picture is one of debilitatingly high levels of mortality of journals. The absence of journals hinders the creation of a truly African social science community which is aware of work being carried out by colleagues, cross references its own writing etc. In the absence of awareness of what is going on in the continent, there is enormous amount of spurious originality and one does not always get a sense of being engaged in a cumulative process of understanding through intellectual interaction. (Mkandawire 1988a, 2)

From this perspective, structural adjustment not only damaged the research infrastructure of the continent, but also constrained the epistemic agency of scholars and students, by narrowing their ability to investigate their social contexts and build intellectual communities that would enable cumulative, rather than fragmented, scholarship.

A common theme that emerged across interviews was the extent to which the imposition of these reforms introduced a market logic into public universities. As Sall pointed out, the World Bank's institutional reforms have created a "context driven by market considerations primarily, that's sitting heavily on almost everything – the funding, the values attached to certain types of programmes." (Sall 2015) Indeed, these reforms have subsequently been characterised by CODESRIA scholars as the "marketization" of African universities (Mama 2002; Zeleza 2002a). Mamdani's (2007) detailed study of the World Bank's role at Makerere University illustrates the internal transformation of the university into a site of multiple academic markets, which pitted individual scholars, departments and faculty against each other in competition for scarce resources. In this marketised university, the financial imperatives of complying with the World Bank's demands created economic winners and losers. Departments that did not manage to attract sufficient 'clients' to their courses and sustain an adequate supply of cheap casualised academic labour invariably came under severe financial pressure and were forced to rationalise staff and courses. Accordingly, scholars who did not comply with the market dictates of the university were largely unable to survive their institutional environment, so that eventually many of those who remained were those who at least outwardly conformed to the new institutional logic. Moreover, as Pereira notes (2009), the resulting atmosphere of jealous competition was scarcely conducive to forging and sustaining university-wide alliances, and more vulnerable members of the academic community, such as women, were subject to particularly vitriolic attacks.

The fragmentation of marketised universities, Mamdani (2007) argues, was further compounded by the increasingly strong role that donors played in the administration of some

universities.⁷ They did so in the first instance by individually patronising and/or setting up their preferred programmes and institutes. Cash-strapped universities were in no position to decline this patronage, particularly given the World Bank's demand that universities source revenues from outside of the public purse. In response, universities began to orientate their administration around the project management of externally sponsored ventures, which in turn gave donors an implicit hand in the administration of universities and their intellectual trajectory. The result was the emergence of multiple centres of power with different intellectual orientations, each patronised by different donors with their own interests and constituencies. As universities became more fragmented and difficult to govern, they were less able to articulate their own needs and goals, and therefore less able to resist external demands, whether from the state, the World Bank or donors. Thus, financial precarity and marketization not only circumscribed individual intellectual freedoms; these factors also constrained universities' institutional autonomy.

Moreover, CODESRIA scholars also emphasised that the increasingly powerful role of donors often led to "intentional and unintentional constraints on research into the social sciences." (Oloka-Onyango 1994, 344) Hirji's (1990) account of donor influence at the University of Dar es Salaam provides the first record of these concerns in the *Bulletin*. In it, he chronicles the way in which scholars and students were increasingly drawn into patron-client relations with donors, where donor patronage contributed to the erosion of institutional norms focused on intellectual excellence and open debate. Indeed, this was a common theme across interviews. As Oanda explained:

When structural adjustments programs were being launched in Africa ... a lot of colleagues ... wrote that now the saviours had come. I remember CODESRIA ... first produced work warning Africans, this thing you are embracing is going to be bad ... Those African scholars – in fact most of the people who wrote very juicy stories about the promise of structural adjustment programmes were African scholars themselves who wanted to be taken away from their universities to work in consultancies that had been established by various funding agencies to be a moral and an intellectual justification for structural adjustments programs – and you think one of the most embarrassing things is that the works they

⁷ The World Bank explicitly argued for increased donor funding to universities to cushion them from government divestment in higher education: "Regrettably, all such savings from adjustment measures will not be sufficient, in most countries, to cover the substantial resources needed to revitalize and build African education to the extent essential for future development. International aid will remain a critical determinant of the pace of progress of education in the region." (World Bank 1988, 6)

produced supporting structural adjustment programs still exists. But nobody wants to quote them now because structural adjustments failed. (Oanda 2015)

This became a strong preoccupation in CODESRIA. The first internal evaluation that it commissioned, for instance, included a survey of 55 participants in CODESRIA's activities which sought to elicit their views on the effects of consultancies. The authors found that:

Many of the laureates and other academics view consultancies, which are often rather lucrative, as a dysfunctional development that has lured scholars away from fundamental research and indeed from the University itself. A large part of this concern grows out of the importance CODESRIA's membership and supporters attach to the need for Africans to define their own research priorities and to have complete intellectual freedom with respect to research findings and recommendations. (Challenor and Gana 1996, 38–39)

Reflecting on the effects of donor patronage, Mafeje observes, “It is hard, if not impossible, to combine revolutionary zeal with personal corruption.” (1990b, 176) Moreover, he adds, “donors, who are invariably politically and ideologically motivated, are hostile to or at best suspicious of independent-minded African scholars and often accuse them of ‘ideological bias’ ... Under these conditions the African is still being denied the right to become a truly universal person. This is made possible by the internal weakness of his/her world, namely, the unresolved national question.” (1990b, 177) From this perspective, the diminution of African states’ autonomy contributed to the formation of donor-led patron-client relations, which in turn impeded the development of rigorous scholarship and intellectual dissent amongst African scholars.

This sociological approach to thinking about the academic project in turn led CODESRIA scholars to consider the question of how African intellectual communities would reproduce themselves in the aftermath of adjustment. The sustained material and intellectual assault on the academic project had contributed not only towards the consultancy syndrome, but also to a full-scale flight of senior academics from the continent. Many of these academics had been part of the “cold-war induced 'airlifts' of African students especially to the United States” (Mkandawire 1995, 75). Unlike the newer generations of academics, they therefore had the networks and institutional access to enable them to leave for the United States and Europe. Reflecting on his experiences as a member of this generation, Mamdani wrote at the time, “Like birds who cross oceans when the weather turns adverse, we had little depth and grounding, but maximum reach and mobility. So that, when the going rough, we got going – across borders.” (Mamdani 1993,

15) During this period, nearly 100,000 African scholars left the continent for the global North, particularly the United States; as a consequence, African immigrants now constitute the most well-educated demographic in America (Zezeza 2009).⁸ In some cases, scholars from Anglophone countries could only find work in the “Bantustan” universities of apartheid South Africa, in what Bako (1990) describes as a “cruel irony”. Meanwhile, World Bank policy advocated the use of experts from North America and Western Europe in place of investment in African higher education. Zezeza notes that this “influx of expatriates lowered the short-term costs of neglecting African universities and the concomitant emigration of skilled labor, including academics. By the late 1990s, there were an estimated 100,000 expatriates working in Africa – at a cost of \$4 billion – almost equal to the number of skilled Africans who had left. (Zezeza 2009, 116)

One of the effects of this flight of scholars from their universities, Mkandawire (1995) argues, was a dislocation in institutional memory and the transmission of knowledge, with the result that the institutional basis for the reproduction of the next generation of scholars was profoundly damaged. Under the combined pressures of the domestic state, international financial institutions and donors, higher education under structural adjustment was often reduced into a “beleaguered academic community fighting for every ounce of respect and resources coming its way.” (Mkandawire 1995, 77)

Thus, in the assessment of CODESRIA’s community, structural adjustment destabilised African universities in three ways. It eroded the material foundations of universities; it narrowed the scope for academic freedom; and it constrained the intergenerational renewal of academic communities. In the writings of CODESRIA scholars, the assault on higher education was not only viewed as a smaller part of the broader assault on the economic and political underpinnings of African societies. More profoundly, it was seen as dismantling the capacity for informed public deliberation, which was central to the autonomous and democratic functioning of a society. These ideas would underpin CODESRIA’s organisational and intellectual efforts to defend the academic project under structural adjustment.

2. CODESRIA’s defence of the academic project

⁸ Zezeza cites the 2000 U.S. Census, which finds that 49% of African immigrants in the United States over the age of twenty-five had a bachelor’s degree or more, as compared to 25.6% for the native-born population and 25.8 percent for the foreign-born population as a whole. (Zezeza 2009, 132)

In light of this analysis of structural adjustment, CODESRIA's community began to conceptualise its defence of the academic project as part of broader social struggles for sovereignty and democracy. This defence took on two interrelated forms: an intellectual defence and an organisational defence. Its intellectual defence assumed the shape of intense introspection on the nature of the academic project. This collective introspection resulted in a distinctive conceptualisation of academic freedom and provided new ways of thinking about the social dimensions of research, which contributed to a significant shift in CODESRIA's intellectual trajectory. These reflections in turn shaped its organisational defence of the academic project. During this period, the Council initiated an academic freedom project; it set up training and support programmes for young researchers; and it dramatically expanded research funding and publications. The aim of these projects was to provide the institutional and material conditions necessary for free thought, and to contribute to the intergenerational survival of the academic community. As a consequence of these organisational and intellectual measures, the evidence indicates that CODESRIA attracted a large number of young scholars and grew substantially in both size and influence.

CODESRIA's 1988 General Assembly signalled the beginning of its collective introspection on the nature of the academic project. The papers at the General Assembly focused largely on analysing the collapse of universities within the broader disintegration of the political and economic underpinnings of African societies (Hountondji 1988; Nyong'o 1988; Mkandawire 1988a; Imam 1988). However, the Dakar Declaration emanating from the General Assembly moves beyond critique to suggest a positive conceptualisation of the academic project, in which its defence forms part of broader social struggles for democracy and emancipation:

The task of resolving the African crisis imposes a specific responsibility on the African social science community. To meet this responsibility it must take stock of its own shortcomings and pool its energies for concerted action ... the research process must not only seek to achieve self-reliance within the international social science community ... but should also focus on the issues and relations that are of concern to the vast majority of the toiling peoples of Africa as they engage in their daily struggle for existence. These struggles must be for the basis for scientific conceptualisation, and the focus of scientific analysis. This re-orientation of research will serve to free the social scientific progress from extraversion, elitism, neglect of the environment and gender bias. It will also serve to put social science knowledge at the service of the vast majority of the

African population, especially the movements for the democratization of the continent and the full emancipation of its people. (“Dakar Declaration” 1988)

What is of particular interest is the way in which the Dakar Declaration indicates a new kind of consensus within CODESRIA, regarding not only the negative impacts of adjustment programmes, but also the need for African scholars to respond by re-orientating the academic project to one of service, in which popular struggles for emancipation and democracy provide the normative underpinnings of African scholarship. We can see then the ways in which the Dakar Declaration reflects the ideas that emerged in intellectuals’ writings on the impacts of structural adjustment, particularly the emphasis on the potential of the academic project to contribute to social flourishing.

The following year, CODESRIA announced the Kampala Symposium on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility. This was significant, for it was the first pan-African forum on the nature of the academic project in Africa. The call for papers framed the conference in explicitly sociological terms, describing it as an opportunity “to direct ... attention to the nature of the research environment on the continent, that is, to reflect on the social context of research as an intellectual activity.” (1989, 1) In this regard, the organisers wrote, reflections should “critically examine the roles of the various actors in the social sciences – the state, researchers, donors, the civil society etc.” (1989, 1) Indeed, members from all of these groups were invited to the conference. The conference resulted in the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility, which moves beyond the notion of professional academics to include intellectuals in general, and locates intellectual communities within a broader social context. The preamble begins:

African people are responding to these intolerable conditions by intensifying their struggles for democracy and human rights. The struggle for intellectual freedom is an integral part of the struggle of our people for human rights. Just as popular forces are waging a struggle for democracy and human rights, so are African academics. Intellectuals, students and other members of the intelligentsia are deeply involved in their own struggles for intellectual and academic freedom.” (“The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility” 1994)

Following on from the Dakar Declaration, the Kampala Declaration explicitly links intellectual freedom and social responsibility in its title, and suggests that intellectual freedom is necessary

for intellectuals to fulfil their responsibilities to society. In this regard, Article 22 stipulates: “The intellectual community has the responsibility to struggle for and participate in the struggle of the popular forces for their rights and emancipation.” The Kampala Declaration further specifies the economic and political conditions required for the exercise of social responsibility, including the right to participate in the democratic governance of universities, the right to freedom of movement and security of tenure, and the state’s responsibility to provide sufficient funding to higher education institutions.

The Kampala Declaration therefore departs in a number of ways from international declarations of academic freedom from this time, such as the Lima Declaration (World University Service 1990). Unlike the Kampala Declaration, the Lima Declaration focuses narrowly on academics rather than intellectuals more generally. It sets out academic freedom as an element of universal human rights; in doing so, however, it abstracts the realisation of the right to academic freedom from the political and economic struggles of the academic community. Thus, it makes no reference to the need for government funding to sustain the material conditions for academic freedom, nor does it make reference to the need for democratic procedures within the university. Furthermore, while it contains a clause noting the responsibility of academics to address the problems of society, the analytical relation between the concepts of responsibility and academic freedom is not made explicit. Finally, while the Lima Declaration provides a negative definition of freedom in terms of the absence of restraint, the Kampala Declaration provides a positive definition of freedom in terms of the capacity to serve society.⁹

One can see then the emergence of a distinctive and new conceptualisation of academic freedom as a component of a broader class of intellectual freedoms grounded in the social responsibilities of intellectuals. This is significant, for the Kampala Declaration represents the fruits of the first sustained reflections on the academic project by a pan-African community, and it therefore continues to function as the main reference point for conceptualising academic freedom and investigating its breaches on the continent (see, for instance, Tamale 2000; Du Toit 2007; Appiagyei-Atua, Beiter, and Karran 2015). Moreover, as Zeleza (2003, 155) notes, CODESRIA’s “preoccupation with the productivity of connections between academic freedom and social responsibility” has also influenced global debates on academic freedom, primarily

⁹ The closest intellectual precursor to the Kampala Declaration I could find was John Dewey’s defence of academic freedom: “[Academics] ask for no social immunities or privileges for themselves. They will be content, for their own protection, with any system which protects the relation of the modern university to the public as a whole.” (Dewey 1915, 408) However, while Dewey grounds academic freedom in social accountability, he conceptualises academic freedom in negative terms as freedom from interference. In contrast, the Kampala declaration has a positive conceptualisation in terms of freedom to serve.

through UNESCO, which devoted its 1998 World Conference on Higher Education to this topic (UNESCO 1998).

However, the relationship between intellectual freedom and social responsibility is not uncomplicated or uncontested, and its conceptualisation in the *Kampala Declaration* was an outcome of heated debates at the conference, many of which were published in a more polished form in *Academic Freedom in Africa*, edited by Diouf and Mamdani (1994). While the majority of contributors relate the lack of freedom in the academic community to its lack of social relevance, they seek to demonstrate that the internal dynamics of universities played an important role in shaping the limits and possibilities of the social role of academics, and by implication, their freedoms. In doing so, they periodise African universities and craft the concept of the *development university*. This term arose from the fact that most African universities were not set up under colonial rule; instead, as we saw in the conceptual framework, they were largely set up in the post-independence period by nationalist governments with strong developmental agendas.¹⁰ These development universities, Mamdani argues, were established within the narrow confines of a state logic, with the aim of providing “a training ground for personnel that would manage the process of ‘development.’” (1994a, 2) In this respect, different contributors emphasise different elements in the development university and the ways in which this shaped the academic community’s social role, and by implication, its freedoms. Hagan (1994) stresses that, as an incubator of an elite, the development university posed a political threat to the state, so that university protests against structural adjustment were interpreted as an attack on the state, which then responded with heightened hostility and violence. In contrast, for Ake (1994) and Ki-Zerbo (1994), the state’s narrow emphasis on relevance to an elite project undercut the development university’s broader social relevance, and impeded the formation of broader alliances against structural adjustment. And the contributions of Mafeje (1994), and Imam and Mama (1994) emphasise a third strand: that the anti-democratic ethos of the university, and society more broadly, limited the space for critical argument and dissent necessary for developing more creative and effective responses to structural adjustment. Nevertheless, all contributions point to the ways in which structural adjustment deepened the tensions and contradictions within the development university. As Mamdani points out, “The Bank’s demand for academic relevance ... was a return to the developmental logic of the independent state, but without its ambition or vision.” (1994a, 3) In effect then, these analyses excavate the way in which the crisis of higher education was not solely an outcome of external interventions from the World Bank, donor

¹⁰ For instance, as Mamdani observes, in colonial Nigeria there was one university with a thousand students; by 1990, Nigeria had 31 universities with 141,000 students (1994a, 2).

agencies, and increasingly authoritarian states. Rather, it reflected the interplay between these actors and the internal dynamics of the development university.

This conceptualisation of the development university marked significant changes in CODESRIA's intellectual trajectory. In the first place, it brought to the fore the historical transformation of African universities under structural adjustment. By doing so, it created conceptual space for investigating the ways in which Africans might themselves transform universities into more democratic and socially accountable institutions, and thereby helped precipitate a new body of literature on the university as a potential public sphere and the ways in which inequalities diminish its publicness (see, for instance, Mamdani 1994b; Zeleza 2002b; Mama 2008).

Second, the conceptualisation of the development university brought into sharp relief the limitations and problems of research that was overly statist and vanguardist in orientation. This had become a central preoccupation in CODESRIA's community, and by the early 1990s a decision was made to broaden its mandate beyond policy-relevant research to encompass social actors outside of the state. Thus, Bujra stresses, "today CODESRIA no longer claims that its research output is aimed at influencing government policies ... 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." (Bujra 1994, 150) Since CODESRIA no longer focused solely on producing policy-relevant research, it became free to explore research themes that were relevant to other social actors, and it therefore initiated a series of major projects on social movements and democracy on the continent.

This shift was accompanied by an important change in language. Prior to this, all of CODESRIA's research projects were tied to the concept of 'development', such as 'education and development' or 'gender and development'. But by the 1988 General Assembly, a decision was made to drop the language of development from its research projects as "such a formulation cast research themes within a rigid developmentalist mould" (CODESRIA 1997a, 25). Doing so signalled that the Council would no longer be focused exclusively on critiquing development paradigms or elaborating alternatives. There would be space for other modes of research and other foci. This is evident in the publishing patterns of *Africa Development*; while topics related to development occupied the lion's share of journal articles, after 1990 the proportion of articles covering developmental topics decreased substantially, and the journal began to diversify to include other topics, such as social movements and intellectual history.

This was arguably an important expansion of intellectual imagination. As Zeleza notes, the preoccupation with development in African scholarship largely reflected the concerns of "nationalists who prayed at the altar of development" as well as the interests of former colonial

powers, for whom “development served as a handy substitute for the tattered rhetoric of civilization discredited by the horrendous barbarism of World War II, and as a plea against nationalist charges of colonial exploitation.” (Zezeza 2009, 126) As a consequence, the language of development was at least in part an outcome of the ways in which the academy was influenced by external political actors. This locked critical African scholars into what Zezeza (2009, 124) calls a deconstructionist tradition, which compelled them to respond to the empirical distortions of an externally-set intellectual agenda. Moving away from a central focus on development did not preclude such critique; however, as the projects on social movements and democracy illustrate, it created space for scholars to respond to the internal dynamics of African societies and subject these responses to critique and debate within CODESRIA’s community.

This intellectual work then underwrote important organisational changes that CODESRIA undertook during this period. In the first place, the Kampala Symposium was characterised by consensus on the need for organisational responses to the state’s attack on African universities, which had intensified under structural adjustment. Prior to this, Bujra remarks, “For many years, CODESRIA could do very little about [the] breach of academic freedom ... CODESRIA's reaction was often to organize a letter of appeal or protest to the authorities on behalf of the researchers.” (Bujra 1994, 147) The Kampala Symposium therefore helped galvanise a more strategic and coherent response by catalysing the institutionalisation of a programme on academic freedom. Participants in the Symposium made three concrete organisational commitments in defence of academic freedom. The first was a commitment to set up a pan-African organisation to monitor violations of academic freedom. The second was a commitment for organisations to provide “sanctuary to exiled scholars”. And the third was a commitment to lesson donor dependence.

Importantly, CODESRIA has never fulfilled its commitment to lesson donor dependence, but it did fulfil its first two commitments by launching the academic freedom programme in 1993. By 1996 the programme had set up a small fund to provide temporary financial relief to scholars dismissed from their posts and those who had fled their countries and were living as refugees (CODESRIA 1997b, 46). It established a legal defence fund to assist scholars in legal challenges to violations of academic freedom. It began systematically to monitor cases of violations of academic freedom and publish this in its *Annual Report on the State of Academic Freedom in Africa*. And it attempted to develop relationships with civil society organisations in order to “contribute to the wider human rights movement ... sweeping the continent.” (Bujra 1994, 147)

CODESRIA was perhaps uniquely positioned to fulfil these organisational commitments from the Kampala Symposium because it was the only pan-African research institution to enjoy

diplomatic status, which the government of Senegal had accorded it in 1973. As Mkandawire observes in his address to the 1992 General Assembly:

Diplomatic immunity gave CODESRIA an intellectual immunity that is rare in an Africa in which dictatorships, political repression and censorship were the norms ... It meant that CODESRIA could interact with the considerable intellectual community of Senegal without fear that this might somehow offend the host country. It meant that CODESRIA could publish all its scholarly publications without fear of censorship. It meant that CODESRIA could hold conferences in Senegal on any theme. It meant that delegates to CODESRIA's conferences could enter Senegal without any fear of interference by Senegalese authorities. It also meant greater credibility ... since CODESRIA was not seen to be beholden to the host country's political authorities. (Mkandawire 1993, 14)

Many interviewees emphasised the extent to which CODESRIA's academic freedom programme supported intellectuals across the continent to defend scholars against states that had become increasingly authoritarian under structural adjustment. Drawing on his own experiences, Raufu Mustapha explained how the programme supported local initiatives to defend academic freedom:

I was the chairman of ... the committee on human rights and academic freedom of the trade union of academics at [Ahmadu Bello] university. That union had a human rights and academic freedom committee. And the agenda we pursued was essentially two. One to insist on professional conduct within the academia – you know, senior colleagues plagiarising the work of junior colleagues or people relating in particular to the female colleagues and females students. All of these things we put it squarely on the agenda. That's one. The second one was to defend ourselves against the state, and we went to CODESRIA, we got the resources and organised our committee ... You know, the regime wanted to sack them, isolate them and then break their spirits. And we basically refused. Through CODESRIA we were able to get some resources to give to them to keep body and soul together. We made sure we mobilised colleagues in their institutions, and at every point when we had some complaint against the state, like salary or whatever, we made sure we smuggled them into the agenda. And in the end the state had to reabsorb them back into the university system. So in that sense CODESRIA was quite instrumental in helping us ride some of the worst

excesses of structural adjustment and the authoritarianism that went with it.
(Mustapha 2015)

However, as discussed, CODESRIA's community did not only locate the assault on academic freedom in relation to state aggression. Scholars also saw the erosion of the material foundations of universities as an attack on academic freedom. While this affected all members of the academic community, CODESRIA argued that young scholars were the most severely impacted, and this compromised the ability of African universities to ensure intergenerational renewal and thereby sustain the epistemic communities that are critical to building cumulative scholarship. When it launched the Programme of Grants for Thesis Writing in 1988 it therefore conceptualised postgraduate students and emerging scholars not only as those in need of support, but also as the authors of original research with the potential to make significant contributions to African scholarship and contribute to the lifeblood of CODESRIA's intellectual community:

In 1988, CODESRIA broadened its scope of activities in support of researchers by initiating training ... and mobilisation of *the much underutilised research inputs of graduate students*. In the past, CODESRIA's efforts were limited to providing services to social scientists who are already in the profession. The ... Programme of Grants for Thesis Writing is principally aimed at tapping a very important source of original research – research by graduate students ... Even more severely starved of grants [than established scholars] are graduate students who are about to embark on thesis writing. For them there are hardly any grants which would permit them to carry out original field research, acquire reading material or utilise such research technology as computers. As a result, graduate research is confined to compilation of papers from secondary materials ... *The outcome of all this has been the scarcity of original empirical work and consequently weak efforts at synthesis*. (Editorial 1988, 1, emphasis added)

The Programme of Grants for Thesis Writing has been a substantial one. Between 1987 and 2009, CODESRIA sponsored the successful completion of just over one thousand doctoral and masters theses.

This conceptualisation of young scholars as an epistemic resource was carried over into CODESRIA's training programmes. In the context of the mass exodus of established scholars to western countries and to consultancies, the Council began to supplement its financial support for young scholars with a programme of intellectual support through general methodological

workshops and specialised intensive training institutes. These institutes were intended “to produce a critical mass of researchers competent in theory, fieldwork and comparative analysis” in a given thematic area (CODESRIA 1997b, 14). In 1992, the Council launched its Summer Institute on Democratic Governance, and in 1994 it launched the Gender Institute. These two institutes have remained the bedrock of CODESRIA’s subject-specific training programme, but have been complemented by less regular institutes, such as the Institute on Arts and Humanities and the South-South Institute. These institutes have been used to develop state of the art thinking on social phenomena. In this respect, Aminata Diaw, the officer in charge of CODESRIA’s training programme, explained the genesis of the Governance Institute:

Because this was the beginning of democratization in Africa and CODESRIA has set up this institute to try to better understand what is going on in the continent. And so it was not just a matter of crisis or not, it was CODESRIA trying to play its own role and trying to understand what is going on through all these national conferences and democracy and talking about election and that process etcetera. So this is how this institute was born. (Diaw 2015)

The institutes have therefore not only provided training to emerging scholars, but have also been a critical source of original scholarship in the organisation and resulted in book series and journal articles. At the same time, the institutes have catalysed the institutionalisation of systematic bibliographical support. For each institute, CODICE, the Council’s Documentation and Information Centre, provides thematic bibliographies and reproductions of key articles to participants; these annotated bibliographies are subsequently made publicly available in order to alert other African scholars about critical research in a given field, and thereby facilitate the creation of cumulative scholarship. As Bujra explains, “CODICE played an active role during the 'book hunger' of the 1980s, in responding to researcher's requests for documents, especially for journal articles, and documents/reports published by international and inter-governmental organizations, which were inaccessible to African researchers and their institutes.” (Bujra 1994, 147) Thus, one can see how the combination of research funding and intellectual support for young scholars was designed to help in the intergenerational reproduction of the academic community.

In this respect, one of the features that stood out most clearly in interviews was the way in which the tone of interviewees often changed when discussing these programmes. Many scholars spoke of the period of structural adjustment in terms that oscillated between the combative and the distressed, but when they turned to CODESRIA’s support for young scholars, the emotional

range shifted to that of warmth and pride. Consider, for instance, Mkandawire's recollections of these programmes, which he helped craft in his capacity as Executive Secretary:

And I'm amazed when I travel around, I run into people who tell me, oh you made me stay in academia. I even ran into the owner of the Mail and Guardian [Trevor Ncube], and he came to me and said, thank you very much, you saved my life. We found out he received a small grant, we have this programme, the Small Grants Programme, it's a \$3000 grant for an MA student to write a thesis. They could order books, they'd send us a list of books and we'd get Blackwell's to ship the books. A \$1000 books, a \$1000 for research costs and the rest you get after publication. Over the years, some 3000 people received that grant. It was such an amazing programme. (Mkandawire 2017)

Similarly, Mustapha, who was just embarking on his career during adjustment, remarked:

It's really done well for us in the structural adjustment period. Quite frankly, if it wasn't for CODESRIA, people like me wouldn't have an academic career as such. It was a platform where I [as a young scholar] could engage with my contemporaries, where I could engage with my seniors. I could get some resources to do fieldwork, I could try and publish. (Mustapha 2015)

Commenting on the emotional resonance of CODESRIA for this generation, Jimi Adesina, explained that for many young scholars, CODESRIA became a "home" and a "refuge" (Adesina 2015).

During this period, CODESRIA therefore became a younger and larger organisation. Young scholars were not only drawn by the financial and intellectual support that the organisation offered, they were also attracted by the new intellectual trajectory of the organisation. As Mama put it, for many young scholars, the Kampala Symposium was an "exhilarating" introduction to CODESRIA:

For many of us (myself included) at a much early stage in our scholarly careers, it was an exhilarating discovery of the region's most significant social research network – CODESRIA. It was inspiring enough for me to promptly resign my lectureship at the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague, and return home to

Nigeria, intent on joining colleagues in the work of building independent intellectual spaces. (Mama 2011, 3)

It is doubtful that many scholars in the diaspora were similarly inspired to return home, although the Kampala Declaration did help motivate scholars in the United States to form the Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa as a diasporic complement to CODESRIA's programme on academic freedom (Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa: 1991). Nevertheless, Mama's comments indicate the extent to which the organisation's new intellectual trajectory helped draw in a younger, third generation of African scholars. As CODESRIA had anticipated, these scholars later became a critical source of intellectual change, particularly by embedding feminist intellectual work in the organisation (something which I discuss in a separate paper).

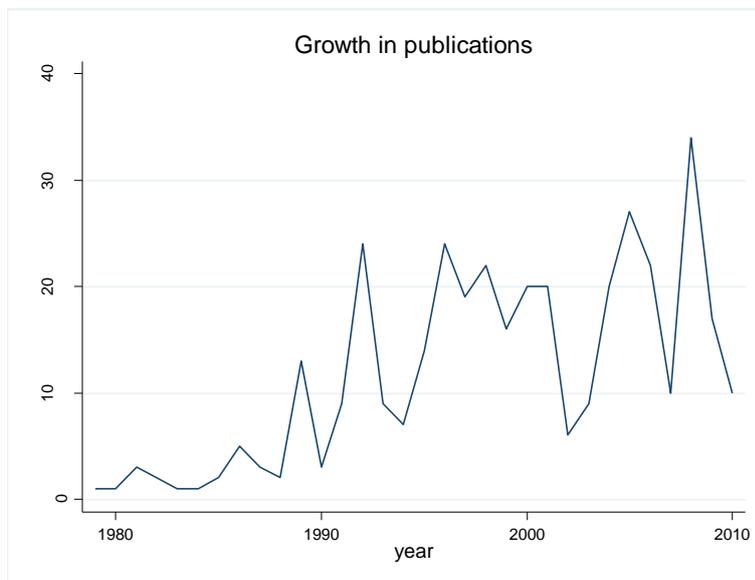
CODESRIA's programmes for young scholars in turn provided an important pipeline to its programmes for established scholars. During this period, the Council dramatically expanded its Multinational and National Working Groups, which constitute the main infrastructure in which established scholars conduct research into the thematic concerns established by the General Assembly. This not only provided much-needed financial support for scholars to conduct new empirical research, but also enabled a cross-disciplinary and regional approach to research in Africa. This was specifically intended to counteract the fragmentation of research and isolation of scholars during this period. As the programme officer in charge of publications, Bangirana explained:

CODESRIA was established to break down the barriers, the linguistic barriers, national boundaries and so you find somebody who operates, for example in Uganda, knows very little about the Congo which is their next door neighbour separated by mountains. Yet because it's English speaking, you find many scholars in Uganda quoting studies in Nigeria, studies from Ghana, [rather] than scholars across the border in the Congo. So there is no regional understanding of an issue which is solved by the kind of programs run in research ... [The] cooperative researching networks [bring together] scholars in different countries studying different aspects of the same thing across the region. The value in that – you end up with a bilingual book and in the beginning – when resources allowed – all the chapters, all the articles collected from the different countries would be translated so you would get the informed understanding, what is the comparative understanding of what is happening in the region, which you don't get when you deal with scholars who operate in their universities. You get a

study on Malawi, and that is what it is yet things that are true in Malawi might be true in Zambia or the lessons you draw from one could be applied to another. But you find that there is no understanding of that. (Bangirana 2015)

As Figure 3 below illustrates, the rapid growth in book publications began towards the end of the 1980s, where the output of multinational and national networks, together with the institutes, contributed substantially to this growth.

Figure 3: Number of books published by CODESRIA over time



The growth in book publications was matched by a corresponding growth in journal publications. In 1976, CODESRIA published only one journal, *Africa Development*, as well as its newsletter, the *CODESRIA Bulletin*. This state of affairs persisted until the early 1990s, when it began to expand its stable of journals. In 1992 it assumed responsibility for the publication of *Afrika Zamani*, a journal of African history, which had previously been published under the auspices of the Association of African Historians. In 1997, it then started publishing the *African Sociological Review*. Fred Hendricks, the founder of *African Sociological Review*, explains how CODESRIA came to publish the journal:

The *African Sociological Review* had an accidental birth. It was purely by chance that I was discussing social science journals in Africa ... in Dakar with Thandika Mkandawire, the then Executive Secretary of CODESRIA in 1996. In his usual inimitable and eloquent manner, Thandika regaled me about the syndrome afflicting African journals – the introduction of Volume 1 Number 1 with great

fanfare, only for it to be the last issue of the journal. It was a major problem of sustainability ... In the euphoria of national reconciliation in South Africa, the two [racially segregated sociology] associations merged and the proposal on the table was that both journals would cease publication to make way for an entirely new journal for the new association. It seemed incongruous to me that in a situation of problematic sustainability of journals on the continent, a decision had actually been taken to end a going scholarly concern. I asked Thandika how he would react to the suggestion of us dropping the South from the *South African Sociological Review* and turning it into a truly continental vehicle for social science thought, discussion and debate. (Hendricks 2008, 1)

In this way then, CODESRIA began to assume responsibility for an increasing number of journals in the context of rapidly deteriorating conditions for research and publication. By 2016, it was responsible for publishing fifteen peer-reviewed journals, covering a wide range of disciplines and topics, from higher education to anthropology, research methods, culture and international affairs.

In considering this period then, one of the remarkable features of CODESRIA's defence of the academic project is the extent to which it was marked by intense intellectual ferment. CODESRIA's community responded to structural adjustment not only with critique, but by building a positive account of the academic project which sought to understand it on its own terms. This opened up new ways of thinking about the social role of research and helped attract a new generation of young scholars into the organisation. This narrative therefore suggests that structural adjustment signalled a new period of autonomous thought in CODESRIA.

Writing at the height of structural adjustment, Mkandawire had argued that young African scholars were backed into a corner and fighting for survival, and were therefore forced to profoundly rethink the academic project in Africa. As a consequence, it is this generation of scholars that "is likely to initiate an autonomous discourse and reflection on Africa – autonomous not in the sense that it is isolated but in the sense that it takes the specificities of the African experience seriously and has a proactive rather than reactive relationship with non-African scholarship." (Mkandawire 1995, 80) In many ways, he added, "much of the early African scholarship operated within the parameters defined by Africanist discourse so that in its critical form it was essentially reactive – 'debunking' colonialist or neo-colonialist interpretations of the African experience, while, in its non-critical form, it tended to assume a mimetic mode that stifled originality. Getting out of both of these stances may be the greatest challenge to the current generation of African social scientists." (1995, 80) But looking back on this period, it seems that

CODESRIA as a community, and not just a subset of young scholars, had embarked on a period of autonomous thought.

This intellectual ferment coupled with the rapid expansion in CODESRIA's activities to include extensive training, funding and publication meant that the organisation became increasingly influential on the continent. Such intellectual and organisational growth seems paradoxical when one reflects on how African universities were simultaneously contracting. But as Mustapha explained, CODESRIA's growth was largely driven by an attempt to "put its finger in all the leaking holes of the ship" and thereby to provide succour to "African academics [who] were on their last leg." (Mustapha 2015) He added:

So I think there's a sense in which, but for CODESRIA, many African academics would have gone down with the whole structural adjustment programme – had very little money for research, very little money for travel, very little avenue to get to know what other people are doing, access to books. All of those became possible in that period because of CODESRIA. (Mustapha 2015)

In this way then, the decline in African universities indirectly contributed to the rapid expansion of CODESRIA. Put differently, he added, it became a refuge for a community that was "threatened [by] structural adjustment ...and CODESRIA realised it could do something to address some of those threats, and then it did exactly that, it mobilised people, it mobilised resources, it rose up to the challenge, and by so doing was able to attract attention, resources, prestige to itself." This view is echoed in CODESRIA's recent internal evaluation of its membership and governance: "Much of the functioning of CODESRIA in the 1980s and 1990s was, in effect, making up for the failures of the African university and trying to maintain a scientific community buffeted by dwindling research facilities and an often repressive environment. This explains, in part, the wide range of activities embarked on by the Council." (Mkandawire, Sawyer, and Sané 2015, 10)

In this respect, Bujra regards CODESRIA's growth as part of a broader trend on the continent, in which the centre of debate moved from state-owned institutions to "NGO institutions at the regional and sub-regional level ... which are 'owned' by the academics themselves." (Bujra 1994, 136) CODESRIA's growth therefore can be located in a larger intellectual transition from the public to the commons. However, as the next section demonstrates, this transition engendered a new set of problems for the organisation.

3. The impact of structural adjustment on CODESRIA

While CODESRIA responded to the attack on the academic project with considerable intellectual and organisational innovation, it was not immune to the debilitating impacts of structural adjustment. In this section, I show that the organisation remained deeply tethered to African universities and research institutes. Their deterioration therefore undercut the organisation's capacity to function as a space for informed scholarly debate and shifted control over the organisation away from its constituency towards donors. This constrained both its institutional and intellectual autonomy.

As discussed in the previous section, CODESRIA became a younger and bigger organisation under adjustment. At the same time, however, the institutional profile of its members, and the nature of their involvement in the organisation, also changed. CODESRIA's membership was initially confined to institutes, faculties and professional associations. But by the 1992 General Assembly, this institutional model of membership was put under severe pressure. Sall characterised the changing nature of the Council's relationships with research institutions in this way:

Look it's hard. For the first nineteen years of CODESRIA's history the membership was exclusively institutional, representing research centres, universities, faculties of social sciences, institutes for nineteen years from 1973 to 1992. And so, CODESRIA was to a certain extent, an initiative of the institutions, or representatives of institutions; they owned it and it was their home. And then institutes began going into some difficulties because by the 1992 Assembly a number of them were not able to pay their fees for one reason or the other and so they kept coming and their engagement in terms of paying fees and in terms of participating in the governance of CODESRIA lessened, and that process was accelerated by the arrival of individuals in large numbers and much more dynamic. So in a sense the individual sort of took over the control of CODESRIA and the governance of CODESRIA. (Sall 2015)

The decline in institutional membership was related to the economic crises of the 1980s and governments' divestment from higher education under structural adjustment, which meant that research institutes seldom had sufficient funds to pay their membership fees. As Mkandawire explained: "When we started off the membership fee was important, because CODESRIA was set up as a – the acronym itself is telling – the acronym stood for Council of Directors of Research

Institutes – and they paid their own way to the General Assemblies. It wasn't much, but they paid something. But with financial crisis, and the collapse of their currencies, even those who were willing, who had the money, couldn't send it to Dakar. It started happening from the 80s, and in the mid-80s in the assault on the university from the World Bank, that becomes more dramatic.” (Mkandawire 2017)

However, the reasons for the decline in institutional membership were not only financial. The decline in institutional membership was also related to the political and intellectual volatility that structural adjustment catalysed within the higher education system. One manifestation of this was the high turnover in the leadership of African research institutes, which contributed to a fracturing of institutional memory, and meant that institutional representatives seldom had in-depth knowledge of CODESRIA's ongoing affairs (Mkandawire, Sawyer, and Sané 2015, 14). Their level of intellectual involvement in the organisation also dropped substantially, perhaps in part because they may have been preoccupied with managing the crises that their own institutions were undergoing. Thus, for instance, in his report as the Executive Secretary, Olukoshi notes that when CODESRIA announced a call on the Conference of Deans of Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities, they received only twenty abstracts from a pool of over one thousand faculties: “the problem that arose was not so much that deans of faculty were not aware of the initiative – many reported that they saw or received the announcement – as that they did not have the time or the will to propose an abstract. And of those who sent abstracts, only a handful really addressed themselves to the call for applications that was issued; the others went on a trajectory of their own as if the intellectual content of the announcement did not matter.” (Olukoshi cited in Mkandawire, Sawyer, and Sané 2015, 15) The decline of universities was accompanied by an acute deterioration of professional associations during this period. As a senior officer in CODESRIA noted:

It's absolutely you know mind-boggling to see that we have very few real social science professional associations in the social sciences on the continent that are working. The African Political Science Association has problems; history associations are not doing well, anthropology associations are not working. (Sall 2015)

The upshot of this was that the institutes, faculties and professional associations which had hitherto constituted its membership typically ceased to contribute financially to the organisation and ceased to participate effectively in matters of institutional and intellectual governance.

While institutional members played an increasingly marginal role in the organisation, young researchers were becoming more involved in the governance of CODESRIA. This was in part because they felt invested in the Council due to the financial and intellectual support that they received. But it may also have been because CODESRIA offered an environment that was characterised by greater intellectual freedom. In this respect, the internal governance evaluation notes that the “hierarchal structures of African universities and the repressive political and academic environment in which they operated tended to push young researchers towards CODESRIA, which, free from those constraints, allowed more space for intellectual initiative. This new constituency of younger scholars did not feel represented by directors of research institutions and the Deans and Heads of university faculties and departments.” (Mkandawire, Sawyer, and Sané 2015, 7) Moreover, this third generation of scholars seems to have been characterised by a strong bent towards activism. One scholar from this generation explains:

At the very beginning it was a much more kind of directors and people who were close to the establishment and all of that. But at this particular time we are talking about it begins to attract much more kind of pan-Africanist, activist, feminists – people who had an axe or two to grind with their home governments, partly over education policy, over structural adjustment, over democracy. (Mustapha 2015)

By the time of the 1992 General Assembly, it appears that participants could be roughly divided into two camps: institutional members who were largely uninvolved in the organisation and had little knowledge of its workings, and younger, activist researchers who were increasingly invested in the organisation. The consequence of this was that younger researchers were able to push successfully for amendments to the Charter to enable individual membership in the organisation, such that individual members began to dominate the organisation (Mkandawire, Sawyer, and Sané 2015, 13). This hybrid model of membership has complicated the governance structure of the Council, since the votes of individual members have the same weight as those of institutional members. Although internal reviews have periodically addressed this issue over the last two decades, the Council has as of yet been unable to resolve the issue (Challenor and Gana 1996; Mkandawire, Sawyer, and Sané 2015).

Moreover, the changing nature of members’ financial contributions affected the Council’s financial model. Prior to structural adjustment, interviewees indicated that institutional members contributed a small, but significant portion of the Council’s income. As Moyo explained:

So in that period, 1975 or 1976, it was a small office. By 1978 or 1979 they started to convince the Scandinavians – Sweden and Norway – to give money. Obviously the British or the Americans were not involved or interested. [Funding] was internal, and there was not a lot of money. (Moyo 2016)

However, under structural adjustment, income from membership decreased to almost negligible levels, since neither institutional nor individual members typically had the financial resources to pay their dues. Commenting on the ongoing non-payment of fees by institutional members, Mambinta Sarr, a financial officer in the organisation noted:

In regard to finance, cash contribution, I don't think we've ever had anything. I think the perspective of people from outside as well is that CODESRIA has a lot of money, and therefore doesn't need. So it's always them coming to ask what CODESRIA can contribute rather than the reverse. So I think that's one of the problems that we have. (Sarr 2015)

Indeed, when the internal evaluators of CODESRIA conducted a survey of scholars in 1996, the authors were dismayed to find the following:

[S]everal respondents to the survey stated they do not recall ever having been asked to pay dues. Many did not even know the amount of the membership fee. The annual dues are \$30 for individual members and \$500 for institutional members. It seems that the one time dues payment becomes an important issue occurs at the triennial General Assembly when only paid members have the right to vote. In June 1995, one month prior to the 8th General Assembly, only two institutional members had paid their membership dues. Currently income from dues accounts for only 1% of CODESRIA's budget. It is particularly noteworthy that there is no reference to membership dues in that section of the 1993-1998 Plan of Activities. (Challenor and Gana 1996, 87)

This was corroborated by my informal conversations with delegates to the 2015 General Assembly. They indicated that they were provided with donor funding to attend the event and also to pay their membership fees.

This discussion provides an indication of the extent to which CODESRIA's reliance on donor funding has grown, such that a number of interviewees characterised this form of funding

as “donor dependency.” As the Council’s annual reports indicate, over the last twenty years, the core funders have been the Scandinavian agencies – the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Norwegian Development Agency (DORAD), and the Danish Agency for International Development (DANIDA) – which provide upwards of 50% of the Council’s income for its core activities – administration, research, training and publications (see, for instance, CODESRIA 2006, 2011, 2014). The Government of Senegal has also offered core support, which it has provided in kind, rather than in cash. As Mambinta Sarr indicated, “The Senegalese government does fund the building – they pay half they rent, that’s how it’s been for the last forty years, and then we get tax exemptions.” (Sarr 2015) In addition to this, CODESRIA has approached a variety of development agencies and philanthropic organisations based in North America and Western Europe for programme funding, such as the Carnegie Foundation, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Unlike core funding, this is tied to specific research projects, which have a defined start and end date.

Interviewees tended to emphasise that CODESRIA’s decision to rely on Scandinavian funding for core operations was a strategic one, which aimed at securing the intellectual autonomy of the organisation. As an officer in the Council explained:

Part of it is related to the nature of the donor countries. Some countries are very domineering, whereas the Scandinavian countries are more flexible. Their funding was intended to help us escape political persecution, and donors were very sensitive to that, to the need to maintain autonomy. So donors have never really been a problem. They understand that for us autonomy is an existential question. If we didn’t take it from our political leaders so that people were willing to die or go into exile, why should we take it from donors? (Anonymous CODESRIA officer 2015)

CODESRIA, this officer argued, held intellectual autonomy to be a core value of the organisation, and had therefore rejected and avoided funding from donors that would attempt to sway its intellectual trajectory. Thus, he added, “when it came to voting, we kicked out the donors because they don’t get a say in our intellectual agenda. Many of us would rather die than have the World Bank tell us what to do research on.” (Anonymous CODESRIA officer 2015) Another senior scholar in the organisation differentiated SIDA from other donors in terms of its unwillingness to cultivate patron-client relationships with Africans. It is worth quoting his comments at length, since they provide an indication of how donor patronage often works, and

show how CODESRIA's relationship with SIDA was a deliberate attempt to prevent this from occurring:

[M]y understanding of SIDA is actually that you're talking of international solidarity in the best spirit of the word. I think the Scandinavians felt that Africa's problems will not be solved unless you have African voices. And they went out of their way to make that possible ... And my personal experience is that it's done at the highest level of solidarity and responsibility ... which is different sometimes you know when you deal with the British. There was one project [in Nigeria], we'd just had a return to civil rule, and the government was trying to formulate a new policy in agriculture, and the DFID guy responsible for agriculture said, 'come and work with us to develop a programme to sell to the government.' I said, 'I don't have the time, but I'll be able to create maybe a two-week window and work with them and then some of my colleagues can take over.' He said, 'oh that's fine.' So I went with them to the Ministry of Agriculture. We had all these Nigerian directors in the Ministry sitting across the table and I was on the DFID side with him. I knew this guy quite well, and I had a sense where the Nigerians were at. And every time he wanted something ... and they showed reluctance, he'd say, 'oh, there's this FAO meeting coming up in Rome. Are any of you going? My office can make it possible.' You know, bribing! I mean, there's a lot of that. I'm not saying all of DFID's work is like that, but there's clearly a lot of that in the work that I see them doing. Now the Scandinavians are far from that. Either my experience of them in Sweden, or watching them in CODESRIA meetings, or even here in what happened between them and CODESRIA officials. So ... it's not the best arrangement to run an organisation like that on donor funds. But quite frankly, if we had to take donor funds, better the Nordic ones. (Mustapha 2015)

Nevertheless, some interviewees argued that, despite the relative intellectual autonomy provided by core funding from Scandinavian donors, this still left scope for subtle forms of attacks on the organisation's intellectual autonomy, particularly with regard to programme funding. As Francine Adade, the programme assistant in the office of the Executive Secretary explained:

You know, each funder for me comes with his own requirements ... We have always tried to respect what they would like us to do in terms of kind of research

we are doing. But at the same time, we feel that we should try to address the problems we have in Africa, rather than listening to what the donors would like us to do ... Some donors, you can send in an application for funding research. And they will reply saying that no, we don't have funds for this but we have funds for that. So this is a way to say that if you want to have our funds, please do this research and not this other kind of research you want to do. (Adade 2015)

In this regard, Mamdani reflects, “over the last decade or so [CODESRIA] has been shaped in a more conservative direction, methodologically, by donor pressure. By having things such as methods conferences, and by methods they really mean quantitative methods.” (Mamdani 2016) Moreover, Sall observes, from an administrative standpoint, the uncertainty of donor funding introduces uncertainties in the organisation's intellectual programme:

You never know how long it will be, you never know whether you get it or you don't get it, and you never know how long you'll have it or continue having it. The priorities of donors may change and you never know how those changes can affect you. I'm not talking about anything that can restrict academic freedom or the possibility to do this or that. We keep away from that as CODESRIA. But within those limits we are saying that there a lot of uncertainties. (Sall 2015)

While Sall was reluctant to characterise this form of uncertainty as a constraint on intellectual autonomy, other interviewees interpreted this uncertainty as an impediment to autonomy. For instance, Oanda, who oversees CODESRIA's programme on higher education, noted that the “programme on academic freedom in higher education ... went silent because of funding.” (Oanda 2015) He pointed to this example as an indication of the extent to which a substantial investment of resources and time, as well as institution building and institutional memory, can be lost if donor funding for a programme can no longer be secured. Indeed it is unclear from an examination of the organisation's annual reports exactly when the programme closed down or the circumstances of its closure; however, what is clear is that academic freedom is no longer a programmatic focus of the Council, and much of the earlier work that went into building the foundations of the programme seem to have been abandoned – for instance, the Council no longer seems to track violations of academic freedom or publish this regularly in an annual report. In this sense, uncertainty in donor funding can undermine the organisation's intellectual autonomy by eroding its institutional investments in particular intellectual programmes. These are not new

observations. Ake's presidential address to the organisation in 1988 provides one of the earliest records of these concerns:

We have been feeling quite good about CODESRIA's survival and robustness amidst the general institutional decay around us. But is it not the case that the whole thing rests on shaky foundations or no foundations at all? Any time the programme officers at Ford Foundation, SAREC or IDRC say no to our funding request, catastrophe looms. What does this mean for our research agenda? What does this mean for our commitment against imperialism or even our struggle for a fairer share of the world's resources? Can we reduce our dependence? Has it already made nonsense of our mission and the values we claim to be maximising? Is the whole thing an illusion or even a delusion? Or is there some space for manoeuvre? (Ake 1988, 6)

In the main, interviewees suggested that CODESRIA had attempted to create this space for manoeuvre by carefully choosing which donor organisations to work with. In doing so, the Council seems to have successfully avoided those donors that engage in more crass forms of bribery and intellectual interference. Nevertheless, several interviewees indicated that the fact of donor dependency has placed a limit on how much space there has been for manoeuvre, and in some cases this seems to have unavoidably, albeit subtly, circumscribed the organisation's intellectual autonomy.

Donor dependency appears to have had a more marked impact on the organisation's internal accountability structures. In theory, the General Assembly elects the Executive Committee, which then selects the Executive Secretariat to run the organisation. The Executive Committee and Executive Secretariat are therefore in principle accountable to the General Assembly. However, as the recent governance review explains, since the crises of structural adjustment, the Secretariat has become "relatively stronger and increasingly less dependent on the resources of its member institutions." (Mkandawire, Sawyer, and Sané 2015, 7) This is because one of the core functions of the Secretariat is to apply for and manage donor funds. Since the General Assembly contributes negligible funds to the organisation in the form of membership fees, this puts the Secretariat in a powerful financial position. Moreover, the collapse in higher education funding has meant that individual scholars often need money from CODESRIA to attend the General Assembly and to conduct research. The result is that accountability is somewhat inverted: while the Secretariat is theoretically accountable to the General Assembly, in

practice the General Assembly is, to some extent, accountable to the Secretariat. As one officer in CODESRIA explained:

The challenge is that the people who come to the General Assembly are decided between the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee. The Scientific Committee reviews the abstract. But the Secretariat receives the abstracts, so if there's someone I think is a troublesome scholar, I can throw out the abstract so it never gets to the Scientific Committee. The problem goes back to the universities, since CODESRIA has to pay for most of the people that you saw there [at the General Assembly]. So that limits the number of people who can come, and it also gives the Secretariat a huge amount of influence. The Scientific Committee does double-blind reviews, but the Secretariat invites people without submitting abstracts as well, and that's not a blind review. (CODESRIA officer 2015)

In essence then, since the Secretariat controls the purse strings: it can decide which individuals are funded to attend the General Assembly, and therefore, who can vote in the Executive Committee and who is eligible to hold office. The CODESRIA officer further pointed to the de facto power that the Secretariat wields over the Executive Committee:

Most of the resource mobilisation is done by the Secretariat. The relationship between the Secretariat and the Executive Committee also depends on the personalities and the personal relationships. They are our bosses, it's very clear that they should tell us what to do in the Charter. We cannot have a work proposal without their blessings. But the fact that you are less powerful in law doesn't mean you don't have a lot of other weapons. If someone is very troublesome you can make sure they don't attend meetings, by not providing tickets and so on. There are possibilities. (CODESRIA officer 2015)

Observing this relationship from the outside, as an ordinary member of CODESRIA, one scholar remarks: "You know the essence of power is hidden. You have what power shows. It's not a decision. I mean I don't believe in democratic participation [in CODESRIA]; that's profoundly untrue." He goes on to explain:

It's a very strange thing. CODESRIA is a very strange thing ... Because you can also see that CODESRIA has a field [in a Bourdieusian sense] ... You have those

who are the periphery of the field and those who regulate the field and they try to be influential ... The Executive Committee will be in charge of the recruitment of the new Secretary General ... if he knows above the functioning of CODESRIA, he will try to patrimonialise from the start, to control the Executive Committee. It's very simple. Missions, per diems, luxury hotels like this and you just can talk. That's the logic of power. Science is not inside. (Bahi 2015)

Ake had already raised concerns about the financial constraints on internal accountability in 1988:

CODESRIA has a problem of accountability ... I have serious doubts as to whether the Executive Secretariat and the Executive Committee are really accountable to the African Social Science Community. You may wish to say that the problem does not arise because the Executive Committee answers to the General Assembly. But I don't think so, because the General Assembly is determined by whoever the Executive Committee decides to invite and to send tickets. Unless there are constituents who make up the General Assembly as of right, independently of the Executive Committee, there is in my mind no accountability. The Executive Committee was working on this direction of making the Social Science organizations such as AAPS [the African Association of Political Science], AAWORD [the Association of African Women for Research and Development], the permanent constituency of CODESRIA, but this move has been inconclusive and the problem remains. (Ake 1988, 5)

However, he also locates the problem within the general membership of CODESRIA, arguing that, "There is a sense in which the Social Science Community is itself a problem to accountability. As far as I can see, it does not think and act as though it owns CODESRIA. It still regards CODESRIA as some body out there with which it can identify, but in something akin to a client-patron relationship. This must change. You own CODESRIA, any money, facility or support given to CODESRIA is given to you. Get yourselves together and exercise your rights." (Ake 1988, 5)

In this respect, the broader community of CODESRIA has in fact organised on several occasions to hold the Secretariat to account. A clear example of this was the community's concern over financial mismanagement in the late 1990s. Commenting on this period, Mustapha explained this dynamic in terms of an "informal sense of whether [the Secretariat] is connected or

not connected to the community.” (Mustapha 2015) The ties of trust and loyalty, he argued, are important to maintaining the cohesiveness of the organisation. If members from the community feel “detached” from the Executive Secretariat, then they become amenable to suggestions to take decisions against the Secretariat, despite its clout. “In that sense,” he added, “heuristically it’s accountable to the community, and if somebody steps too far out of kilter with the basic instinct of that community, or substantial sections of it, I think you will hear a grumble, possibly even some mobilisation. But then in the kind of everyday, you have a powerful Secretariat, which can act or not act depending on what their interests are.” (Mustapha 2015)

This narrative suggests that there is a marked difference between the formal and the informal rules of governance in CODESRIA. The formal rules of the organisation enshrine democracy and internal accountability. Informally, however, the economic situation of African universities and scholars has impeded the full realisation of these principles, by reorienting the Secretariat’s accountability to donors over the broader community in the day to day running of the organisation. It is important to note that the community is still capable of mobilising to engage in collective action to hold the Secretariat to account in those situations where it steps “too far out of kilter with the basic instinct” of the community. Nevertheless, it seems that donor dependency and the decline in higher education funding have weakened formal governance mechanisms for internal accountability.

This diminished internal accountability is reflected in who has access to the Council’s financial data. When asked, not a single interviewee from the general membership could confirm that they had seen the organisation’s annual financial report. This exchange is a typical example:

Hoffmann: Have you ever seen the budget of CODESRIA?

Interviewee: No, never.

Hoffmann: The budget for this conference?

Interviewee: No. Never.

Hoffmann: Do you have any idea how much it cost?

Interviewee: No. I can imagine.

Hoffmann: We can all imagine how much it cost, but have you ever seen the budget?

Interviewee: No, never.

Hoffmann: Okay.

Interviewee: I can imagine and I don't want to imagine. (Bahi 2015)

While the annual reports do provide an overview of the sources of funding and the amounts, they do not provide a financial overview of how monies are spent, or on what grounds monies are allocated and prioritised.¹¹ This does not, however, imply an absence of oversight. After the accusations of financial mismanagement under Mbembe, donors began requiring a yearly audit of the organisation by external auditors (Beckman et al. 2007) and the latest publicly available Annual Report indicates that CODESRIA received an unqualified opinion on its audit (CODESRIA 2014). The clear information asymmetry between what donors have access to and what African scholars have access to suggests that CODESRIA may be more accountable to its donors than its constituency when it comes to financial governance.

This diminished internal accountability also seems to be evident in CODESRIA's primary mechanism for self-reflection and correction: its organisational reviews. During the 1980s, the two major evaluations of CODESRIA were undertaken by teams appointed by the Council's major donors – the first by the Canadian International Development Research Centre and the Ford Foundation 1983-1984, and the second by the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation in Developing Countries (a division of SIDA) in 1990. In 1996, this changed when CODESRIA initiated its own internal evaluation. However, as the authors note, "CODESRIA'S initiative in institutional self-evaluation cannot be said to be entirely self-propelled. Given its funding regime, it cannot but take into consideration the various and at times conflicting interests of its diverse stakeholders, i.e. African constituency, donors, and end users of its products. Thus it can be rightly assumed that the latter, if not the former, would be keenly interested in the outcome of a self-evaluation. This is clearly evident in the great interest displayed by such donors as IDRC and the Ford Foundation, in the various activities, meetings, and workshops that preceded the fieldwork for this exercise." (Challenor and Gana 1996, 3) This suggests that donors have played a critical role in defining the shape and purpose of the Council's institutional mechanisms for self-reflection and correction.

The issue of donor dependency and its effects on the Council's intellectual autonomy and internal accountability have been recurring themes over almost thirty years. However, African economies have not remained stagnant over this period. Over the last decade, the economic prospects of the continent have improved and higher education funding has increased (Sall and Oanda 2014), so that it seems that CODESRIA's "space for manoeuvre" has expanded relative to the period of structural adjustment. Indeed, this was a theme that emerged strongly across

¹¹ Indeed, the lack of specificity in this discussion regarding the financial dynamics of CODESRIA is due to the fact that I was unable to get access to any financial data from the organisation, no matter how general or innocuous, such as a breakdown of budget allocations by proportion rather than quantum.

interviews. In his capacity as Executive Secretary at the time, Sall explained the change in the broader higher education landscape this way:

The importance of research was downplayed ... I think there's a much better understanding of it now than thirty to forty years ago. Partly because people are seeing the BRICS and the emerging powers all over, and it is now established and has been said and repeated that higher education and research have been important factors in determining their success, and people also want to change their own situations in their countries. So knowledge is now recognised and I think even if they have to pay lip service or if everybody pays lip service. It wasn't the case you know, when people were saying that higher education is not a priority and therefore research is even less a priority, particularly social science research That has changed and is changing very rapidly, although the change has not been followed by a change in terms of prioritising resource allocation and I think that is a next step and it has begun. Some African governments have even given *some* money to CODESRIA; we've managed to get a few things. And the government of Senegal is supporting, the African Capacity Building Initiative is supporting, Trust Africa is supporting CODESRIA [these are African philanthropic organisations]. There are new foundations coming up. (Sall 2015)

However, he added, the pace of change has been very slow within CODESRIA. One of the reasons for this, Sall argued, was that many older researchers have been wary of engaging with African governments, given their experience of authoritarianism and the clamp down on academic freedom:

Researchers themselves have been very shy or rather reserved in terms of looking for money from African governments. Again going back to the 1970s, 1980's – single party regimes in many countries, military rule in many countries, life presidents in a number of countries, authoritarianism to put it simply in so many countries that it was unthinkable for anybody to say that I want to do independent, critical research and then go to these regions and expect them to support you. It wouldn't happen, and that's one of the reasons why CODESRIA has been based in Senegal from the beginning, it has been based here because the government of Senegal understood the value of knowledge and opened the space for debate and provided the space for CODESRIA to exist. (Sall 2015)

In this regard, even younger officers within CODESRIA were wary of getting too close to some African states. Recently, CODESRIA accepted a commission from the government of Senegal to write a history of the country, something which it has never done before. While the Senegalese state is a democratic one, at the time, the Gambia was ruled by an autocrat. Younger officers were worried that this would open the door to pressure from the Gambia and thereby endanger CODESRIA scholars and the autonomy of the organisation:

What happens tomorrow if Jammeh [the then president of the Gambia] says, I also want the history of Gambia written? You have members from the Gambia who are as much Gambians as Senegalese. How would you turn down Jammeh? And he might have even donated a million dollars to you. So how will you separate this fundraising from your independence and are you putting your scholars at risk, those who are there, [because Jammeh will then] accuse them of not cooperating. (Bangirana 2015)

Nevertheless, the leadership of the organisation recognised that the political landscape has shifted considerably since the era of structural adjustment: “There are a lot more possibilities now, you know democratic dispensations in so many countries and I think we will get there, I think more governments will be giving money. And as researchers, what we’re saying is, in the coming years we should be making greater effort to raise money from within the continent, because we have not exhausted the possibilities of getting money from here.” (Sall 2015) Moreover, in order to avoid the danger of being captured by a particular state or administration, he indicated that CODESRIA is in the process of establishing an endowment fund:

But we are now saying, when we establish the endowment on the continent we will go to African governments to start with and ask them to, even if it’s one of the grants, because you are putting in the pot and you are not going to have a say on, okay my money in this pot you’ll use it this way, so they have less control over it. And at any rate, the status has changed. As I said, in many governments you find people now who speak the same language to a certain extent, because they have been part of CODESRIA. You find them at the African Union, you find them in many governments holding ministerial positions or just being senior officials here and there. I think the big challenge definitely is to have the funding coming from within Africa herself, or from the global South, and coming on

conditions or on terms that allow you to continue do the work that we think you ought to be doing, rather than being constrained to do narrowly what is thought to be a priority here and that priority is determined in the way that is too restrictive of the freedom of research. (Sall 2015)

In this sense, CODESRIA has the potential to leverage the informal connections it has forged with governmental organisations through the network of CODESRIA scholars who have taken up key positions with these organisations. As another officer in CODESRIA put it:

You go to the AU, the ECA, many of them have published with us. Even people in governments, you saw how many people who served in government or do serve at government attended [the General Assembly]. These are people who really love CODESRIA. (Anonymous CODESRIA officer 2015)

These networks, he suggests, are not simply ones of acquaintance or collegiality; they are formed around a deep commitment to and investment in pan-African intellectual endeavour and could therefore play an important role in shifting CODESRIA away from donor dependency.

The idea of an endowment fund was first floated in the General Assembly in 1988 (Ake 1988). However, almost thirty years later it has yet to be firmly established with the organisation. Some interviewees argued that there are simply no resources on the continent and that donor dependency was ineluctable:

That's the African situation my friend, there are no resources, there are no local resources to sustain it. Although now there's been talk of endowment, otherwise it's a membership fee which is really nominal it cannot take it that far. So it's not unique to CODESRIA, it's something that you find in all such organisations, almost all in Africa are dependent on northern funding, precisely because Africa does not have the resources to sustain. (Zewde 2015)

However, the majority of interviewees indicated that African governments and philanthropic organisations constitute an important untapped source of funding for an endowment. Part of the reason for the lack of a functioning endowment, a young CODESRIA officer noted, is that to “do resource mobilisation, we need a specific unit ... But we have no one who is dedicated to that. We have probably approached various African states and philanthropic organisations, but we

don't have a professionalised resource mobilisation unit that has a strategic vision.” (Anonymous CODESRIA officer 2015)

In this sense then, the issue is less one of African governments' unwillingness to support CODESRIA, and more one of the Council's institutional will to mobilise resources outside of donor funding. The officer put it this way:

Part of the reason that these questions are not addressed is path dependence. The donor funding means that we are free and comfortable. These people come here through solidarity, so we don't have to do much for them. If you have that, why would you do these extra things? Especially when they take away from the things you really want to do. Most of the Secretaries are scholars. It's Thandika who says “administrative work is donkey's work”. Many of these people are like that. Thandika, Samir. This administrative work is the last thing they want to do, especially when there's nice funding. Donor funding does make us comfortable in many respects. (Anonymous CODESRIA officer 2015)

Expanding on the idea of path dependence, he argued:

We need to move beyond this donor dependency. Why haven't we approached African governments? One because we are crappy as a Secretariat, we are bad with resource mobilisation. If we don't have to do it, why should we do it? If you have a lot of money from nice donors why should you go asking others? But there is also a historical legacy, because African governments were our problem. It was something we couldn't do before, and we haven't learnt to do it now. We have full diplomatic status in Senegal, like a consulate, because scholars were running away from their governments. It was given diplomatic status in the late 1970s. This problem already existed in the 1960s. (Anonymous CODESRIA officer 2015)

In this respect, Abou Moussa Ndongo, who had been a librarian at CODESRIA for just over thirty years, explained: “Of course the history of CODESRIA maybe attests to that. That from the beginning CODESRIA wanted to do research and not get involved in money matters. So the focus was on research and of course the independence which has been guarded has been mainly because of the position of the Senegalese government which from the beginning gave CODESRIA diplomatic status ... So that immunity and diplomatic protection given to

CODESRIA by the Senegalese government was very helpful from the beginning.” (Ndongo 2015)

Aghi Bahi argued more forcefully that the organisation was unable to interrogate explicitly the impacts of donor funding, since it was dependent on this funding:

CODESRIA, like a certain number of African governments and African institutions, is like the respectful prostitute of Jean-Paul Sartre [referring to bad faith]. How can you develop a discourse against me if I am your donor? (Bahi 2015)

The metaphor of bad faith is an interesting one. It was originally deployed by de Beauvoir and Sartre to explain the ways in which individuals may come to consciously deceive themselves, often to negotiate situations in which they are at the receiving end of power asymmetries. However, Bahi deployed the concept to explain the institutional character of CODESRIA, to suggest that the organisation was not willing to recognise and pursue the possibility of moving away from donor dependency. Indeed, senior officers within the organisation tended to emphasise the need to continue seeking donor funding in the same breath as pointing to the need to move away from donor funding:

So there are resources on this continent that we can mobilise. I am not saying this to say we will stop seeking donor funding from outside of the continent tomorrow no, no, particularly when we are getting the funding on terms that are favourable to African research. I think we appreciate the support that SIDA, DANIDA, the Nordics in particular, but also some of the private foundations like Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie Corporation, their support has helped CODESRIA growing and I'm hoping that – we still need them, we still need them. (Sall 2015)

The interviews therefore suggest that the factors which enabled CODESRIA to guard its intellectual autonomy and expand dramatically under structural adjustment – collegial donor funding, diplomatic status, and a mistrust of the state and its idea of the developmental university – are now the factors that constrain the organisation from moving away from donor dependency by developing stronger ties with African higher education institutions, governments and philanthropic organisations.

African universities' decline has also been a critical factor in the organisation's intellectual health. CODESRIA sought to ensure that African intellectual communities were able

to reproduce themselves during structural adjustment by providing financial and intellectual support to young scholars. However, some scholars argued that CODESRIA had not provided sufficient mentorship to young scholars. Mamdani, for instance, explained his thinking as follows:

Our disadvantage in CODESRIA, what we never did was to consciously understand the importance of young PhDs, of grooming them, shaping them, directing them. We had a small grants program which was a PhD fellowship but we never made a connection between those scholars and the scholars who rose in CODESRIA. So it really remained just a program that provided these young scholars with funding, but not mentorship of any sort. Nor did we invest resources in building doctoral programs in African universities ... I think in retrospect that was one of our major failings: we failed to reproduce ourselves as an intellectual community, and that's part of the crisis of CODESRIA. There is the next generation, but it's the next generation of political activists, not scholars. And the activists are institutionally located in NGOs or in the AU bureaucracy. Because of this deficiency we created a rift between the scholar and the public intellectual. That's our crisis. (Mamdani 2016)

However, many interviewees stressed that CODESRIA was but one organisation and could not replace the central role of African universities in training new generations of African scholars. Regardless of these disagreements, the consensus view was that young scholars educated on the continent in the last two decades have often been poorly trained. They have therefore struggled to wield intellectual influence in the organisation. One young officer in the organisation explained:

A lot of the time African social scientists only collect data, and don't pay attention to the idea of moulding it to a larger theoretical context to cast light on the social context. It's partly the training that people have – there isn't a lot of investment in training graduate students. And it also has to go with mentorship: if your advisor has no time to sit and talk with you, and there's no institutional review board, then you can't go very far. These are the basic things. They [young researchers] have no understanding of the ethical implications of this. You don't want to be pessimistic but it's very, very bad. At CODESRIA you can see this because people send a lot of abstracts and applications, so you routinely see this. (Anonymous CODESRIA officer 2015)

Thus, he argued, although CODESRIA was founded by young scholars, young scholars no longer constitute the leadership of the organisation:

But we have a problem. We have a group of advanced scholars who have been exceptional. And we have a group of young scholars, and it's not clear that they will become exceptional. It's partly about the problems with African universities, but we need to do a lot to find the best young African scholars and bring them to CODESRIA. There are many great young African scholars in Europe and Africa. Back in the day, if you were a young scholar who wanted to advance yourself, you had to be part of CODESRIA. But now it's not like that. And the older scholars are dying ... If you look at our old *Bulletins*, you saw Ayi Kwei Armah, Mafeje. If you look at our *Bulletin* now, there's no Chimamanda Adichie. I sometimes wonder, why are we even publishing this? (Anonymous CODESRIA officer 2015)

So the problem is not only directly related to the quality of teaching and research at African universities. As Bahi put it, the problem is in part that CODESRIA reproduces the institutional cultures of African universities, which have become less vibrant and more hierarchical over the course of structural adjustment:

CODESRIA produces the local scientific fields where subalternity of the young researcher is a fact ... [To invite] masters students [to the General Assembly], never, they will never do that. PhD candidates, maybe if all these important full professors are full of themselves. If they can exploit them, yes, that wouldn't be good. What I call exploiting is that we are working together and I say "Oh Nimi I'm the big professor and just you take this note and you write something," and then I publish the paper without your name ... To me, we are simply reproducing what we are in our universities. (Bahi 2015)

As a consequence, he argued, the scope for new ways of thinking has been substantially narrowed:

You can say that when people are talking during their seminar, it's almost the same rhetoric ... so there is a process of reproduction ... The same stereotyped

sentences, the same stereotyped ideas. And you have new ones – the newcomers usually are quite original but you know, structures are structuring... so if you want to be part of the field you have two options. Try to be like the others or to be a heretic and this is another option. I don't know who is courageous enough to be heretic and to be ejected from this. No I don't think so. Have you heard heresy? No no no. As we think like this as Samir Amin would say and then – oh where is Mamdani? What does Mamdani say? I mean they would guarantee the way of thinking and those who are able to think differently are in minority. They remain quiet. They simply remain quiet, or for instance myself, we just laugh. We have our refuge in humour and yes. I mean it's a way to evacuate frustration. (Bahi 2015)

These comments imply that earlier generations of scholars in CODESRIA may have been sources of intellectual “heresy”, but without the full and equal participation of young scholars in the life of the community, and their ability to disrupt older ways of thinking, these interventions have become increasingly hegemonic. The narrative therefore suggests that the decline of African universities under structural adjustment has been accompanied by a lack of intergenerational renewal within CODESRIA, which may have contributed to intellectual ossification in its community.

Moreover, the decline of African universities has not only influenced the nature of CODESRIA's intellectual community, but has arguably also affected its scholarly production. Formally, the CODESRIA office is supposed to manage only one of its journals – *Africa Development*. The rest of the journals are intended to be managed and edited by senior scholars across the continent. However, in practice, scholars edit a journal, but the management of the journal is undertaken by the CODESRIA office due to constraints from within the university. The only exception to this seems to be the *African Sociological Review*, which is managed and supported by the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. Volunteer editors and CODESRIA staff involved in the journal publications process all emphasised the institutional constraints emanating from universities, particularly in terms of resource constraints on academics' ability to conduct research and edit journals, the poor training of young scholars, and the lack of collegiality within universities, which makes it difficult to get peer reviews. As a consequence, editing journals is often a laborious and time-consuming affair. One of the implications of this is that journals seldom appear regularly. One editor explained:

CODESRIA has twelve journals – only three are regular. The nine have exactly the same problem. First of all you have difficulties in collecting papers. Difficulties in reviewing those papers. After a peer review process, for the submission first, the African scholar, young scholar in a general manner would submit – how can I say this? – garbage ... they will not respect the editorial charts. In fact they submit bad papers to African journals. When they have a good paper they send it in the United States or Britain. And our reviews and our journals, it's for bad papers. So you can understand the process can be very long. Personally I spend a lot of time reading papers, rejecting them first. Please, please – we don't have time. Respect this, please you have too much mistakes. Please correct these first and then you submit again. All this before we go through the peer review process. Then there are corrections – once you have the three reports, the colleague that's submitting the paper would hardly correct this paper. Okay so you waste time. And after you have the type-setting aspect and another checkout of the paper. The colleague will not check so I will check, and after you have publishing constraints – if you don't have money – you cannot publish the paper. (Zewde 2015)

The irregular nature of journal publications has important consequences, since indexing services and digital libraries typically only house journals if they are published regularly. This substantially narrows the digital visibility and distribution of these journals, and excludes CODESRIA publications from bibliometric analyses of African scholarship. Moreover, editors argued that the lack of support from universities meant that editors were required to subsidise journal production, but the high labour intensity of this work threatens the sustainability of these journals:

So I don't get support from my university to edit the journal for CODESRIA. When I work with them I use my own money ... it will be just for free, we do not have support in all of this. I do all of this myself ... I can give one or two good students – please do you have time, can you do this for me [for free]? Yes – okay God Bless you. No – okay. So I'm doing a lot of jobs. It is exhausting. Who can go on like this? (Bahi 2015)

Bahi went on to contrast this situation with that of the *African Sociological Review*, arguing that it “is regular because of the South African government. Because there is a kind of nationalism – a

very positive one in South Africa – they want ... to boost South African [scholarly] production. I think they have understood that controlling the business, controlling the world and enhancing development starts first by scientific knowledge. So the journal *African Sociological Review* is supported by the faculties by the university.” (Bahi 2015) Given these constraints, the management of journals by the CODESRIA office involves a strong developmental component:

CODESRIA’s policy is that rejection of weak papers is not enough. So you are required to submit a report that can help this young scholar develop this paper a little bit more ... So there is some form of mentorship in the kind of reports that we do, hoping that through this the scholar will write a better paper. If this paper is weak, what is weak in it? Is it theory? Is it the way data is analysed? What is the problem? (Bangirana 2015)

Nevertheless, CODESRIA staff argued, such developmental assistance in the process of managing and editing journals could not take the place of thorough university training. As a consequence, journals tend to have a very high rejection rate, and even then, “you end up with most of the papers [being] very descriptive studies, which tells you that there is little research going on. People want to do some kind of literature review or what and submit an article to a journal. [But] in an ideal situation, journals should be vehicles for empirical studies.” (Oanda 2015) In this regard, interviews suggest that CODESRIA’s journal publications are deeply reliant on the character of African universities, such that the deterioration of higher education has contributed to the deterioration in the visibility, sustainability and quality of the organisation’s journals.

In sum, this section has focused on the ways in which the decline in African universities under structural adjustment shaped CODESRIA’s organisational and intellectual character. In the first place, divestment from higher education coupled with the general constraints of economic crisis changed CODESRIA’s funding structure. As membership fees decreased to negligible levels, the organisation became almost completely donor dependent. This has reshaped its organisational character, inverting its accountability structure and giving donors greater control over its governance despite CODESRIA’s emphasis on institutional autonomy and democratic practice. In this regard, it is telling that, while donors have access to the organisation’s annual financial reports and audits, the General Assembly does not. Donor dependency may also have given donors greater control over CODESRIA’s intellectual trajectory, despite its strong commitment to intellectual autonomy. There are a number of indications of this, not least the closure of the academic freedom programme as a consequence of shifting donor priorities. The

inverted accountability structure in turn provides one explanation for the lack of organisational will to move away from donor dependency. The General Assembly has become distanced from matters of financial governance and has left issues of financial strategy to the Executive Secretariat, which is well-funded and therefore has no immediate, pressing reason to pursue an alternative policy. In this way, donor dependency has helped create the conditions that make it difficult for CODESRIA to extract itself from donor dependency.

Moreover, the collapse of research infrastructure and the deterioration of teaching and scholarship in African universities seem to have contributed to a diminution in the quality of intellectual debates within the organisation in two regards. One, the poor training of young scholars in the post-adjustment period seems to have made it difficult for them to contribute as intellectual equals in the organisation, thereby endangering the community's capacity for intergenerational renewal and intellectual ferment. Two, there has been a deterioration in the visibility, sustainability and quality of the organisation's journals. In this regard, the erosion of the political and economic underpinnings of the academic project may have impeded CODESRIA's ability to act as a space for critical argument in which the right to intellectual "heresy" is guaranteed. This helps explain the disappointment of interviewees with the current quality of intellectual work in their community. It also helps explain the apparent lack of institutional will to move away from donor dependency, for institutional change to be driven from within arguably requires sustained collective self-reflection and criticism.

4. Conclusion

In tracing the ways in which CODESRIA responded to structural adjustment, the narrative that emerged suggests that structural adjustment marked an important turning point in the underlying context of African scholarship – it signalled the beginning of scholars' recognition that their love for the state was an "unrequited" one, as Mkandawire (2005, 42) puts it. It also marked the end of the development university and the start of the marketised university. During this period then, the centre of intellectual debate moved away from African universities, which increasingly fell under the control of the World Bank and African governments, and towards academic non-governmental organisations, like CODESRIA, which are controlled by African academics. As such, structural adjustment fundamentally reshaped the intellectual and material underpinnings of CODESRIA with complex and ambiguous results.

In the short term, CODESRIA's analysis of structural adjustment led to considerable intellectual and organisational innovation so that it grew in size and influence. In the assessment

of CODESRIA's community, structural adjustment represented an attempt to dismantle the capacity for informed public deliberation, which is central to the autonomous and democratic functioning of a society. In light of this, CODESRIA's community conceptualised its defence of the academic project as part of broader social struggles for sovereignty and democracy. This defence took on two interrelated forms: an intellectual defence and an organisational defence. Its intellectual defence assumed the shape of intense introspection on the nature of the academic project, which initiated a more autonomous intellectual phase in CODESRIA. This phase was characterised by the need to respond not only to the demands of an externally-set agenda, but also to respond to the internal dynamics of African societies and subject these responses to critique within CODESRIA's community. As such, this phase marked the first attempts to elaborate new standards, or rules, of scholarly excellence. No longer would it be sufficient simply to respond to the intellectual preoccupations of northern scholars. It now became increasingly important to elaborate an independent intellectual agenda, in which their intellectual community sought to make sense of, and trouble, their social world.

On the basis of this, CODESRIA's organisational defence focused on providing the institutional and material conditions necessary for scholars to engage freely with each other in a community, and aimed to contribute to the intergenerational survival of the academic community. Critically, it was able to do so through political and economic support from the governments of Senegal and Scandinavia. The Council initiated an academic freedom project; it set up training and support programmes for young researchers; and it dramatically expanded research funding and publications. As such, CODESRIA's defence of the academic project sought to build intellectual institutions that offer the possibility of developing a more cohesive and cumulative commons, and as a consequence, it grew substantially in both size and influence. This explains the apparent paradox of CODESRIA's remarkable organisational growth at the height of the crackdown on African universities.

Yet, this growth came with costs. As CODESRIA's intellectual work on structural adjustment suggests, adjustment profoundly undercut the material basis of the academic project and destabilised its institutions and practices. State divestment from higher education in turn significantly increased CODESRIA's financial dependence on donors. This seems to have inverted its accountability structure, giving donors greater control over its governance and intellectual agenda despite CODESRIA's commitment to autonomy and democratic practice. The concomitant intellectual decline of African universities appears to have inhibited intergenerational renewal within CODESRIA, thereby impeding its capacity to engage in self-reflection and critique.

This suggests that African universities are plausibly the source, and therefore the limit, of knowledge commons' capacity to flourish over the long-term. If this is correct, then African knowledge commons are better understood as complements to public goods, rather than substitutes. While much of the commons literature has focused on the ways in which commons present alternatives to both the market and the state, a small but important body of scholarship has sought to demonstrate that commons are entangled with resources that are governed in the public domain or through private property arrangements (see, for instance, Benkler 2014). This case study contributes to this literature, and adds a further insight – the characteristics of public goods provision may shape the characteristics of the knowledge commons in ways that are complex and not immediately obvious. In particular, while knowledge commons may emerge in the short term as an apparent solution to the decline of public goods provision, in the long-run the decline of public goods provision may contribute to increasingly fragile and fragmented knowledge commons. This possibility emerges most clearly in contexts where public goods are ill-provisioned, threatened with closure, or managed in ways that are unequal or unsustainable.

The decline of public goods provision is not only a problem of the global South. Public goods in the global North are also often threatened with divestment, closure and inequality. Moreover, knowledge commons that attempt to operate on a global level are likely shaped by the provisioning of public goods at national and regional levels.¹² As a consequence, the relationship between knowledge commons and public goods provision cannot be treated as a background assumption, but is of central theoretical importance when considering the factors that contribute to the flourishing of the knowledge commons as well as its deterioration, in both the South and the North.

Seen this way, CODESRIA's capacity to flourish over the long-term is likely circumscribed by divestment from public education. Nevertheless, faced with the existential precarity of the academic project in Africa, and its deep institutional contradictions, the choice of scholars to respond by engaging in intense collective reflection is a remarkable one. It is difficult to convey the anguish and precarity of scholars working in this period. For many, it must have been tempting to react by critiquing the external agents driving this assault to the exclusion of all else, or, when faced with the sheer scale and depth of the assault, to resign themselves to the

¹² Wikipedia is a good illustration of this. A study conducted in 2015 found that 45 percent of all edits to Wikipedia came from five countries (the United States, United Kingdom, Germany Italy and France) and that there are more Wikipedia editors from the Netherlands than all of Africa combined (Graham, Straumann, and Hogan 2015). The overwhelming dominance of northern editors to Wikipedia is likely due to a complex set of factors, including lower levels of broadband in the global South and lower levels of state investment in education in these countries.

situation and opt out by leaving the continent. CODESRIA's community chose to respond differently by engaging in collective reflection. This could not have been an easy path to take, but it contributed to a flowering of new ideas and ways of thinking, not least a distinctive articulation of academic freedom as being deeply bound up in social responsibilities, an articulation that continues to resonate with scholars today, informing and guiding their work on academic freedom on the continent and beyond (UNESCO 1998; Tamale 2000; Du Toit 2007; Appiagyei-Atua, Beiter, and Karran 2015).

CODESRIA's choices during this period very clearly illustrate the value and strength of collective reflection and action in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. They also illustrate the value of carefully choosing one's allies, and of focusing on long-term objectives in the face of short term exigencies. It appears then that collective deliberation has been central to CODESRIA's survival in two senses – deliberation in the sense of reflection and debate on the social-ness of the academic project, and deliberativeness in the sense of a judicious and intentional selection of allies and long-term goals.

Considered from this perspective then, perhaps CODESRIA's main achievement during structural adjustment was to offer a living example of the value and possibilities of the academic project in Africa, and of how its limits and contradictions might be negotiated. Its tenacious survival contributed to a shift in the discourse on structural adjustment, such that subsequent austerity packages have been very careful to distance themselves from the language of structural adjustment and keen to cultivate the appearance of democratic consensus (Meagher 2019). Its commitment to fundamental research has, over the years, come to be seen as having an abiding value that outlasts consultancy research, and has begun to function as a reference point in debates about re-investing in higher education (African Higher Education Summit 2015). And perhaps most importantly, CODESRIA has preserved and enriched African intellectual traditions. In much the same way as the Frankfurt School sought to preserve the humanist tradition of German culture under Nazism (Jay 1973), CODESRIA has held African intellectual traditions in trust for future generations, for a time when African universities were once again able to act as spaces for free thought.

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