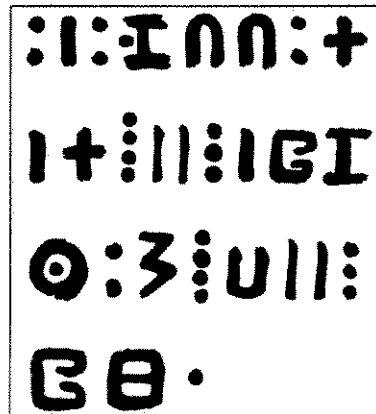
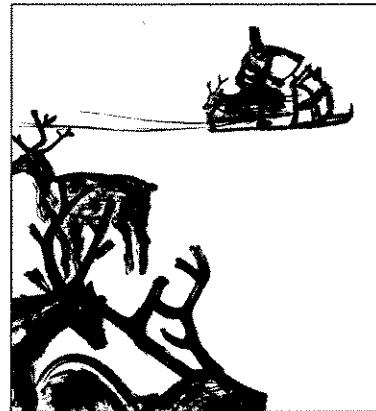
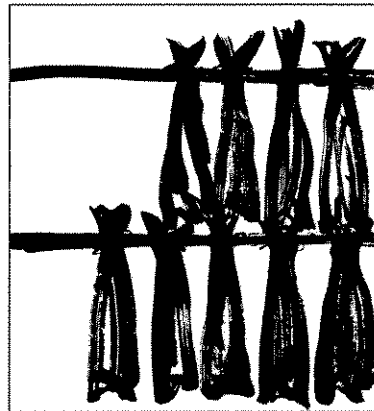

Lisbet Holtedahl, Siri Gerrard
Martin Z. Njeuma, Jean Boutrais (eds)

Le pouvoir du savoir de l'Arctique aux Tropiques

The power of knowledge from the Arctic to the Tropics



KARTHALA

Preface

"The Role of Knowledge in Regional Development" was the theme of an international conference held at the University of Tromsø, Norway, September 19-21 1993, which brought together participants from Cameroon and Mali, France, Denmark and Norway. The conference was convened in the framework of the Ngaoundéré Anthropos programme, a collaborative enterprise linking the universities of Ngaoundere (Cameroon) and Tromsø (Norway)¹. This programme was initiated jointly in 1991 by Mohammadou Eldridge (former director of the Human Sciences Institute in Garoua, Cameroon) and Lisbet Holtedahl (professor at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Tromsø).

Among the papers in this volume you will find a narrative of the life of the Mbororo by Ndoudi Oumarou, who died in a car accident some months after the conference. He was a researcher, a poet and storyteller. Through his collaboration with Father Henri Bocquené, he learned to transcribe and write in Fulfulde. Although he had no formal education, he soon became a valued researcher in the Anthropos programme. This book is dedicated to him.

Rauni Magga Lukkari, a well-known poet and writer, has contributed a poem in Sami, which we give in the original as well as in English translation. In all her work, in prose and verse, she gives lucid expression to the experience of the Sami people, and Sami women in particular, in the Scandinavian countries.

The other chapters, with the exception of two, are revised versions of the original conference papers. The conference constituted an important step in a continuous effort to foster collaboration between peripherally situated universities in the North and South. The aim was, on the one hand, to produce knowledge which would be intelligible in the local contexts in which it originated², and on the other, to enhance research and teaching competence in order to make indigenously based knowledge available to the academic community. The specificity consists in the importance given to the intelligibility of the knowledge produced in the

1. A short description of the Anthropos project can be found in the bulletin *Méga*

original local contexts. Our aim has been, through local collaboration, to extend the fields of research and define new parameters so that the production of knowledge and competence may be a genuine exchange and not simply a one-way transmission from North to South.

The interest of Tromsø researchers in North-South collaboration needs to be understood in the light of the history of the University of Tromsø, which was founded in 1968. At that time, North Norway was still regarded as an « underdeveloped » region incapable of contributing to national growth as it is conventionally measured in GNP. The University was planned as a tool for the development of the northern region. Many of the Norwegian contributors to this volume have participated in the process of establishing new knowledge, in close collaboration with the regional population, in order to promote development. This has not been an easy task, but it has been inspiring and has served to demonstrate some of the advantages of working in a peripherally located university. We learned that the knowledge produced and the way of producing and transmitting knowledge in such a situation is "central", not "peripheral". In addition, when a researcher lives in the "field", as anthropologists say, and when the students are members of the communities described and analyzed in his or her lectures and research reports, the development of knowledge will necessarily be based on immediate and continuous feedback. Such feedback constitutes a unique means of correcting the researcher's findings and checking his or her learning process. In this situation, the field worker and university teacher will receive much more direct feedback from the informants than in the more "colonial" context, where informants usually do not have access to the research results. And, in the process, the university teacher's sensitivity to and comprehension of the consequences of knowledge-production is activated in a different way. It becomes easier to correctly assess the impact of academic knowledge on regional development. Such knowledge can promote development, but it can also reproduce asymmetric power relationships.

In our study of minority problems, we have benefited from our experience of working in Africa, where we have had the opportunity to compare the tasks of building not only knowledge but also competence with colleagues and students from countries in the South. It should be mentioned here that the pedagogical situation at the University of Tromsø differs from that of other Norwegian universities. This is due, to a considerable extent, to the existence of a long-standing student movement involving the dynamic participation of both Sami and other North-Norwegians. The students were very interested in looking critically at the way knowledge was defined, constructed and transmitted, and they pointed out the implicit and explicit agenda revealed through our research

interaction with colleagues from metropolitan centres, this often strenuous experience tends to be viewed as a handicap holding us back in the international race to attain the summits in our professional production. However, collaboration with colleagues in the South has strengthened our conviction that such an experience is an incitement to develop new and exciting modes of knowledge production, and we hope that this volume will testify to this.

Many people have contributed to this project. The staff at the Centre for Environmental and Development Studies (SEMUT), led by Jens Revold, has done an enormous job with the practical aspects of the conference and fund-raising. Rachel Djesa Issa put all her efforts into assisting with the organization of the conference and ensuring continuous communication among the contributors. Ole Mjøs, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tromsø at the time of the conference, gave us moral support and encouraged our collaborative efforts. He also provided sustenance to the Ngaoundéré Anthropolos programme and to this conference volume. The Anthropolos staff in Ngaoundere has assured the considerable task of keeping up the North-South communication. Per Martin Grenlund contributed secretarial and administrative assistance. The book project would never have been realized without the efforts of Elina Almasy, and the facilities provided by the Maison des sciences de l'homme in Paris.

Funds were obtained from many sources. The conference was financed by the Institute of Social Sciences (ISV) and the Centre for Environment and Development Studies (SEMUT) of the University of Tromsø, by the Norwegian Universities Joint Committee for Development Research and Education (NUFU), and by the Norwegian Research Council (NFR). The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has contributed by providing the funding of the final phase.

Our warmest thanks to all who have made this book possible.

Siri GERRARD
Lisbet HOLTEDAHN

There are two introductions to this volume. They are meant to complement each other. In the English version, the editors wish to explain in more depth the background of the programme of which this volume is a part and to highlight the specificity of the situation of the researchers in Tromsø as well as their preoccupations when they do research at home in the North (which is also the West) and abroad, in the South or far-away Australia. We hope to have presented the major features and orientations of the research reports and essays assembled here, but we have not undertaken a detailed analysis of the texts. However, a synthesis is presented by Jean Boutrais¹.

The introductory texts have been inspired by long discussions in several meetings of the four co-editors.

development, and the role of the state in the process. The article discusses the impact of international aid on the development of peripheral regions, and the role of the state in the process. It also discusses the impact of international aid on the development of peripheral regions, and the role of the state in the process.

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INTRODUCTION

Peripheral regions – pioneering knowledge

Lisbet HOLTEDAHL, Siri GERRARD and Martin Z. NJEUMA

The continuous production and transcendence of knowledge that characterises the post-industrial world requires a different kind of participation, one which liberates people to play an appropriate role in articulating their own aspirations, creating their own visions of the Good Life, and thus defining their own priorities in a development which does not lead them as latecomers to where others already are, but as pioneers to where they themselves wish to go!

In this volume, «knowledge» is a key notion used in our analysis of changing North-South relations. We shall bring this perspective to bear on processes of social change in peripheral regions in North Norway, North Mali and North Cameroon. These three regions have all been faced with resource problems and ethnic conflicts, which have sometimes led to open aggression in Norway and Cameroon, and even to war in Mali. In all three cases, public authorities from outside the regions have been heavily involved in promoting development.

A hegemony of knowledge? As researchers working in marginal universities and in marginal areas in the South and the North, our experience has shown us how difficult it is to counteract the reproduction of the hegemony of the western academic elite in the North-South relationship². This hegemony is as detrimental to

1. Fredrik Barth, «Objectives and Modalities in South-North University Cooperation», *Forum for Development Studies* 1, 1992, pp. 127-133.

the South as it is to the North (including the West). The reproduction of western hegemony is assured through long-established practices of production and dissemination of knowledge. The criteria of what counts as knowledge continue to be defined in the academic centres of the West. The dissemination of this knowledge is based on notions of *transfer of knowledge* from the West to the South. The production of knowledge about the South that is undertaken in the North is often implicitly based on those ideas about the South that are related to problems encountered in the North³. Furthermore, North and South are notions which need deconstruction.

This has been evident in politics and in planning and development projects in the peripheral areas of both the North and South. However, during the last decade, resistance to transfer models has become evident. As a consequence, the concept of knowledge we use has been broadened to include local knowledge. In this volume we wish first and foremost to rehabilitate local knowledge.

Our interest in systems of indigenous local knowledge stems from the successive failures of national policies and of planning and development projects based on models of transfer of technology and scientific knowledge, both within national frontiers and in a North-South relationship. A critical analysis of these transfer models reveals that they do not provide an opportunity for the beneficiaries to enter into a dialogue and to integrate scientific knowledge into their own systems of knowledge. As a result, the processes that have been set in motion foster dependence on external aid thereby hampering endogenous local development. Faced with such failures, we propose to take local knowledge as our starting point and to highlight its creativity and inventiveness.

There is an apparent antinomy between scientific and local knowledge in the way they are acquired, appreciated, and instrumentalized. Whereas scientific knowledge imposes itself in a universal sense and is uniformly applied, local knowledge is created on the basis of particular experiences and within specific cultural contexts. Therefore local knowledge tends to be recognized only within smaller groups. The antinomy is further reinforced by the short-sighted, negative appraisal of this knowledge by decision-makers. Scientific knowledge is seen as promoting progress in technology and as a vehicle for modernization, while local knowledge is saddled with an image of obsolescence, and amalgamated with ancient customs and all that is associated with the « traditional » elements of society.

This volume and the programme of which it is a part seek to promote scholarly perspectives which may lead to the emergence of equality be-

tween South and North. In addition, the book focuses on the researcher's empathy and engagement with respect to the communities in which she or he is working to build new knowledge.

Given these preoccupations, we asked all the participants to develop a sociology-of-knowledge perspective. They were to focus on the changing ways of allocating different tasks and hence different fields of knowledge to men and women and according to social class or ethnic group. The researchers were asked then to relate these task attributions to the historical development of the administrative policies and the policies of competence-building introduced by regional and national authorities. We wished, in this way, to identify the local strategies utilized to preserve employment and to keep together households and families, as well as the handling of such local initiatives by regional and national administrations.

Comparing North and South

In addition to the pertinence of the above approach, the significance of the studies presented also lies in the comparable nature of the regions. At first glance, Finnmark in Norway, Northern Cameroon and the Niger Bend in Mali do not seem to have many characteristics in common. For we are dealing with countries in the Arctic and the Equatorial zones ; in the tundra and the savannah ; industrialized or predominantly rural ; prosperous due to oil resources or underdeveloped. Furthermore, the regions are separated by thousands of kilometres. However, close examination at the micro-level reveals that the Mbororo and the Sami do have much in common : their histories and certain ecological features as well as a similar affective relationship to their herds, the same intimate knowledge of their environment, similar techniques of transhumance and similar experience of marginalization and of the upheavals caused by the ongoing decline of pastoralism. These regions also have various handicaps in common, namely an unfavourable environment for agriculture, great distance from the capital cities and thus from the centres of decision-making, conflicts of interests between local communities and central administrations, unfair redistribution of resources and unequal access to natural resources. Over the course of their political evolution, all the regions have been victims of foreign colonial domination which introduced cleavages in the population, gave support to new interests and formalized selective advantages and new hierarchies. Their present population structure is

organise these resources, and as a result the conservation policies conceived by bureaucrats at the national level often fail to address local concerns.

Whether in Finnmark, Northern Cameroon or Northern Mali, traditional activities are undergoing far-reaching changes in the context of the world economy. Nowadays, it is true to say that no society can escape the impact of « modernization » in whatever guise, be it the formation of new identities (young and old, gender or ethnic), changes in eco-systems, and so forth. Whatever the region we consider, women are disappearing from the principal activities : cattle-herding in Adamaoua, reindeer-herding and coastal fishery in Finnmark. The absence of women is not a consequence of the types of resources. It is more the result of the specialization of the production process, of new technologies, of modern education, of labour-market features and of political decisions in many fields. The knowledge and skills related to these activities are becoming more and more masculine. This gendered production of knowledge is impoverished and sectorized. Even support policies for traditional activities (among them, academic and applied research) channel the transformation of local knowledge into the area of masculine responsibilities. This has long been expressed in the organisation of research, teaching and staff recruitment at the universities of Ngaoundere and Tromsø. In the study and career plans implemented, there is little trace of female fields of knowledge, for example in fisheries. Women's knowledge has simply not been transformed into scientific knowledge. Instead, it has been transformed into responsibility for the social affairs department in the bureaucracies. The academic institutions do not even try to profit from the innovative potential of the local knowledge systems of ethnic groups.

Finally, in order to understand the different parameters of local systems of knowledge, the processes of resistance, marginalization and empowerment must be observed and analyzed. These are not geographical in character, but are the outcome of contradictions between centre and periphery, between the dominated and the dominator, complementarity and disparity. The same logic can be observed, and is particularly interesting and visible, in the relationship between society and nature : how are natural resources perceived and used, and how are religious and other concepts of the environment developed. Today development aims at increasing production while also preserving its natural potential in the long term. This new approach can be understood in two ways : first, from the ecologists' perspective on development and, second, from the standpoint of a more sociological conception of development. The former gives priority to the management of resources and natural habitat, which means that development is seen essentially as a technical issue. This ecological

the environment. Sustainable development is based on the exigencies of social equity and includes local knowledge of the environment.

In this global debate on societal values, local communities are being accused by ecologists of degrading the environment and of ignoring long-term interests. But on the pretext of protecting nature, certain ecologists prevent the inhabitants from using the resources and, as a consequence, encourage under-exploitation of the resources, which often leads to inequalities and poverty. The rehabilitation of local systems of knowledge will help balance out a one-sided, technology-based environment management policy.

Lastly, the contributions in this volume seek to articulate both complementarity and contradictions between scientific and local knowledge inputs in development.