

[Auteurs]

Savoir et corruption

Knowledge and Corruption

Le rôle des universités dans la mainmise globalitaire
The Role of Universities in Global Reach

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Introduction

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This book is the result of a conference entitled “What knowledge for what development” which took place in October 2010, in Tromsø, Norway. The impetus for organizing the conference came from a growing concern, in the North and in the South, about the role of universities in current affairs, and global dynamics. Despite numerous collaboration programs and apparent inclusion of the South in global academic discourse, many saw a growing gap between the global elite and the people of the South. Although the academe is often associated with independent thinking and critical appraisal, many signs pointed towards another dynamic: the academe as a catalyst for the reinforcement of laws and policies favourable to the powerful actors of the financial world, with attendant impacts on the reproduction of inequalities. What direct or indirect links can be drawn between the academe and the economic crisis of 2008, mass migrations from the South to the North, specific corruption cases, and various wars around the world? There seemed to be very little ‘meta’ discussions about the academe as an instance and ‘actor’ in those dynamics. That is why we gathered scholars, politicians, administrators and diplomats from the North and the South to start a discussion, and shed some critical light on where universities appear to be heading.

This book aims to provide some reflective feedback and further critical examination, in a plurality of voices, on the role of universities in global dynamics. The case studies presented here come from both the North and the South, and encompass various fields such as business, politics, education, law and health. The book has three main sections.

In the opening part, “Knowledge, Money and Development”, six authors problematize the North-South asymmetry, with special attention to the phenomenon of corruption.

The first article, by Norwegian/French magistrate and politician Eva Joly, is based on her keynote presentation: “Tax paradises, everyday life heroes and the role of academic institutions”. In her speech, Joly referred to the pilot of the film “A Castle in Africa”, by Lisbet Holtedahl, to illustrate some basic problems of knowledge and society, politics and power in North-South relationships. Joly presented first-hand insights from her extensive political work, both in the North and in the South. Unlike many others who stigmatize the South as the central dominion of corruption, she

pointed to the central role of Western countries and multinational corporations in the global corruption network. She also problematized the use of tax havens to deprive countries, rich and poor, of tax revenues. She also stressed the important role of anthropology and film as medium for disseminating and building knowledge about other people. This is especially important given Joly's statement that 75% of countries in the world do not "match" the Western political and financial system of rules and regulations, thereby suggesting the critical importance of creating some understanding, before we judge and condemn the "other".

The next article, by Norwegian diplomat Terje Vigtel, offers feedback on Eva Joly's visit to Zambia. In particular, the organization of her visit created quite an upset, and was perceived by Zambians as another attempt by Europeans to come and teach Africans a lesson. Interestingly also, academics from the University of Zambia appeared uninterested in Joly's visit. However, Joly managed to convince many of the initial skeptics in Zambia with her critical analysis of Western contributions to global corruption activities affecting the South. Although her visit proved successful, with a view to future debates in Zambia, Vigtel suggests reaching out to, and including, traditional, political and religious leaders, who still hold much authority within local civil society.

French anthropologist Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan concentrates on the discrepancies between public norms and practical norms in African contexts, with the resulting challenges when it comes to defining corruption. According to Olivier de Sardan, many of the everyday practices encountered in Africa can be defined as "corruption" or "legitimate behaviour", depending on the perspective from which one is observing them. He gives examples of activities which are perceived as corruption in the West, and as "legitimate" behaviour in Africa. The qualitative methods of social sciences, says Sardan, offer good tools to study small-scale corruption, but are not so well suited to study the phenomenon on a large scale.

While Olivier de Sardan concentrated on micro analysis of small-scale corruption, Norwegian historian and africanist Ketil Fred Hansen focuses on macro analysis of a case involving major institutions in the North and in the South. In his article "Oil for Education in Chad", he describes how the Chadian president managed to free himself from contract obligations, and gained exclusive control over unexpectedly high revenues from oil. As a result, his initial promise of spending 80% of oil revenues on education, health and infrastructure was never fulfilled.

In "L'Opération Épervier et l'économie politique de la corruption au Cameroun" Taguem Gilbert Fah, historian from Cameroon, describes a controversial "anticorruption" campaign set in motion in 2004. The move, during which many high state officials were arrested and sentenced, offers a good example of the dynamics of Cameroonian politics, where anti-corruption policy was used as a political tool to strengthen the power of the ruling president. The article includes several caricatures from Cameroonian newspapers linked to "Opération Épervier" that historian

Christelle Amina Djouldé gracefully collected and contextualized for this book.

The first section concludes with Malian lawyer Boubacar Ba, who writes about corruption in his country, listing a number of reasons and possible solutions to improve the situation. In his analysis, Ba shows how corrupt practices spread from the highest ranks to the lowest sectors of society, and how that has influenced the youngest generations.

The second section of the book “*Les universités entre le marteau et l’enclume*” (Universities between a rock and a hard place) is devoted to the problematic position of scholarly institutions in North-South relations.

The section opens with an article by Norwegian historian Randi Rønning Balsvik about African universities and the role of student protests in the years 1960-2000. Balsvik underlines the importance of students’ struggles for national liberation. She focuses on the case of Ethiopia, where students played a crucial role in overthrowing the regime of Haile Selassie. In her study, Balsvik documents how, since their creation, many universities have been temporally closed due to student unrest. These examples demonstrate a very complicated relationship between the state and universities, in Africa. Universities, as originally Western institutions, find themselves situated between local forms of knowledge and governance on one side, and Western influences on the other. The critical stance of students is often frowned upon, and perceived as a potential threat by local governments.

The article “*La corruption à l’école*” by Malian historian Drissa Diakité offers an illustrative case of the practices described by Olivier de Sardan and Boubacar Ba. Diakita describes how corruption inside the educational sector exemplifies a wider trend to put private interests ahead of those of the larger society. Moreover, since young people are being exposed to corrupt practices from an early age, they become inclined to incorporate them in their own repertoire.

Nigerian historian Maïkoréma Zakari describes the recent history of development in Niger and the challenges connected with the establishment of the University in Niamey. He describes how the development of the interests of the elites lead to a progressive split between the elites and the rest of society. Zakari also tries to foresee a new future, stressing that academic knowledge is important, but not enough for society to succeed. He calls for reforming African universities, towards more practical knowledge, better suited to the needs of local populations and local conditions.

Norwegian sociologist Bjørn Hersoug writes about the academic North-South relations using his rich experience from the Department of Fisheries at the University of Tromsø (UiT). He stresses that, although there has been much collaboration with the South, these have not been given sufficient attention by the authorities, and that collaboration with other First World, European and American universities remains the priority. This situation is not only putting the South at a disadvantage, but

is also increasingly affecting the North, since in many disciplines (like fisheries) the Southern regions are of crucial importance, in terms of market and production, and in terms of education. It is high time that we stop thinking about North-South collaboration as the North teaching the South, and acknowledge that both have something to learn from the other. However, says Hersoug, one should not forget that there is often a mismatch between what universities would like to do, and what they actually can do in terms of academic staff and funding, and that every university is inevitably confronted with this latent conflict of interest: empowering the weak means challenging the powerful.

The last section, “The University as agent of liberation” contains two texts focusing on engaged academic practices meant to empower the larger society.

In her article “Why do we not say that we need them”, Lisbet Holte-dahl recalls examples from 45 years of academic practice as an anthropologist in the South and in the North, and problematizes the lack of academic engagement and its detachment from the larger society. She also describes the philosophy of “shared anthropology”, which she set out to practise in the field, as well as in inter-university collaborative projects in the North and in the South.

Saliou Mohamadou recalls his personal story, one that led him to make the film “Juarke, Boys made Men in Mboum Society” as part of his Master in Visual Anthropology at the University of Tromsø. The film presents the annual circumcision ritual undergone by boys in Mohamadou’s native village of Nganha in northern Cameroon. Growing up outside the village and undergoing modern education from his early years, Mohamadou experienced the mechanisms of exclusion when visiting his native village. Many young people in Africa who enter the ‘required’ western education system share his experience. They find it increasingly difficult to preserve the traditional norms, values and knowledge of their societies, and to connect with older members of their group. Mohamadou reprises the question raised by Cheick Hamidou Kane: is what he has learned worth what he has forgotten?

The Director Randi Tunesvik from SIU, the Center for International Cooperation in Education, writes about the challenges and advantages of partnership programs between the South and the North, with a focus on their long-term sustainability.

In the closing article, Director of Education and Research Department at NORAD (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation), Ragnhild Dybdahl, analyses the role of universities in the long-term policies of the Norwegian government for development in the South.

Norwegian universities lie at the intersection between the market, the state, and civil society. On the one hand, they are relatively independent bodies; on the other, the government may use them strategically. In recent years, development aid has increasingly been used as a tool of foreign policy.

The Norwegian development policy focuses especially nation building and good governance. Other important areas are the global commons, the environment, the climate, forests, conflicts, along with humanitarian disasters among vulnerable populations, capital tax, corruption, and health. The Norwegian government has pledged continued support to higher education and research in developing countries in order to contribute to economic development and poverty reduction on the countries' own terms, with a special focus on gender equality and women's rights. However, although research and higher education play a significant role in all of these areas, they are not priority areas within Norway's development policy per se.

Too often, our projects are too heavily rooted in our own context. We can safely say that the role of universities is not fully exploited in Norwegian policy, and that we can pay more attention to it.

Finally, the book comprises a collection of six films produced by teachers and students of Visual Cultural Studies at UiT. By including the films with the book, we wanted to stress the importance of audiovisual tools and methods in building and disseminating cross-cultural knowledge. References to the films are made within the articles. A synopsis of the films can be found at the end of the book.

We hope that the book will encourage further reflections on the global relationship between "centre" and "periphery", and allow academics to reconnect with the primary function of their institution: to build and spread knowledge useful to the progress of society as a whole, and for the global advancement of humanity.