

Indigenous Knowledge and the Development Debate in Africa

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Abstract

This research employs Bourdieu's theory of habitus to explain the disposition of the donor community to integrate indigenous knowledge systems and practices into development projects. The theory's objectivist perspective specifies the mechanism that links structural conditioning to social practice and regularities. It holds that power is culturally and symbolically created, and it is constantly re-legitimized through the interplay of agency and structure. This facilitates an analysis of the development field as social space characterized by indigenous and donor power relations. It argues that the reinforcement of indigenous knowledge as the main channel for development will generate transferable local capacities and set new energies in motion in Africa that will greatly reduce the prevailing inequalities on the continent.

Introduction

This article employs Bourdieu's theory of habitus to explain the disposition of the donor community to integrate indigenous knowledge systems and practices into development projects. The analysis is built on Bourdieu's objectivist perspective which specifies the mechanism that links structural conditioning to social practice and regularities. It uses this insight to explore indigenous knowledge, being the idea of "local ownership" in development, as a "cultural and symbolic capital" in the development field where the interplay of indigenous and donor ideas produces outcomes. The aim is to analyze indigenous practices as a cultural capital for resisting wholesale imposition of knowledge.

The argument is articulated in twofold: the first part situates the analysis in Bourdieu's theory of practice, i.e. Bourdieu's habitus, to analyze the development field as social space characterized by forces of power relations (indigenous and donor). Indigenous epistemic systems are increasingly regaining recognition as a critical strand of thoughts in opposition to the modernity perspective (Shiza & Abdi, 2014). In the second part, we advocate for a paradigm shift on development thinking and practice that reinforces the role of indigenous knowledge, not as a privilege but as a standardized means for development practice. We took the argument up from a general understanding as the need for local participation in development (Sillitoe, 1998) urging a necessity to bolster indigenous knowledge over donor ideas in the development practice. Our view is not far from Shiza and Abdi's observation that anchoring African knowledge and development is a way of disrupting the global ethno-racial hierarchy to present African ideas of development on the global scale on equal terms to other paradigms. We argue that the use of indigenous knowledge as the main channel for development will generate transferable local capacities and set

new energies in motion in Africa that will curb the prevailing crisis of development on the continent.

The concept of development itself remains a very controversial issue as it tends to mean different thing to different people. As we do not intend to go into the muddled debate on the meaning of development, for this paper, we will adopt a definition that views it as being a process that encompasses the needs and means by which to provide better lives for people in the poorest countries. This definition of development is not only restricted to economic prosperity, but also includes the provision of education, health, food and a sustainable environment which together constitute essential ingredients of human development. Taken from this perspective, we agree that Africa remains one of the poorest continents in the world as most of its people are still mired in poverty despite the significant decline in world poverty in recent years.

The current dismal state of development coupled with the absence of social equity in present-day Africa makes the achievement of an intergenerational equity almost impossible. Works devoted to explaining why Africa has not been able to achieve the level of development deemed necessary for a sizeable portion of its population abound. Mainstream development studies, mostly in anthropological literature, attributed the adoption of indigenous knowledge (IK) in development projects to the failure of top-down, fabricated development frameworks that has dominated development strategies for decades. The dominant argument on the inclusion of indigenous knowledge (local ownership), particularly in anthropological literature, in development projects in non-Western societies is that its adoption will enable development agencies and NGOs to achieve desired universal human conditions. Similarly, the tremendous progress made by China and India in the past few decades has further reduced Africa to the continent with the highest number of people living below the poverty line with one dollar a day or less (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2010).

There is therefore a persistent antagonism amongst scholars and practitioners alike as to the best approach that can lead Africa out of its current development problems. While some scholars have suggested that the problems of the continent can best be resolved by promoting economic growth; others argue that institutional reforms are the panacea to Africa's lasting problems. The only unanimity amongst most scholars is that their respective approaches are based on a Eurocentric perspective that further reinforces the notion of European exceptionalism. We address the different facets of the complex approaches to Africa's near to endemic development challenges in the section on the development debate. This section reviews the status of the development debate with the aim of answering the question of how indigenous knowledge can be harnessed to speed up development in African communities.

This paper is divided into three main sections. The next part recapitulates the development debate beginning from the growth theories of the 1940s to the present dominant neoliberal school of thought. The second part of the paper builds on the analysis of the theory of habitus that roots indigenous knowledge of development in an understanding of embodied capital of local people. The disposition of the donor community to integrating indigenous knowledge systems and practices into development projects is argued in the third section that focuses on situating

indigenous knowledge in development practice and evaluates the application of indigenous knowledge in healthcare using the example of Burkina Faso.

The Development Debate

The debate over the desirability of modern forms of development has been the object of extensive study in development theory by both those that support it and those that oppose it (Rabbani, 2011). The debate between advocates and critics of development revolve around the key question of why countries of the global South and most specifically Africa have not been able to develop and lift themselves out of poverty in the same way as countries of the West and those of East Asia. A wide range of scholarly works have been published by experts from different disciplines to explain the development dilemma and several debates have probed the most suitable solutions to the unending development challenges (Ashcroft, 2011; Murithi, 1997; Savage, 2013).

Development economics research has for the most part been preoccupied with trying to explain the causal reasons why some countries are rich and others not, why some countries, peoples and communities develop while others stagnate, and the structural factors that distinguish countries that enjoy high levels of development and those that still face astonishing levels of backwardness. Most importantly, development theory has placed emphasis on what can be done to strengthen the experience of the rich countries to alleviate the suffering of the poor (Barrett, 2008).

This debate dates back as far as the 1940s when it was essentially dominated by fierce exchanges between the modernization and dependency schools of thought. The 1950s saw the birth of decolonization in many third world countries, and these freshly decolonized territories embarked on a frenetic process of catching up with the levels of development enjoyed by the countries of the West. Development at this stage was viewed from a growth perspective and development efforts focused on achieving growth of the Gross National Product (GNP). The main idea behind this Western model of development was to reproduce the same economic prosperity found in the West in the freshly decolonized countries. The driving force behind this approach to development was the belief that such GNP growth would generate higher per capita incomes that would trickle down from the top to the bottom of the society for the mutual benefit of all (Ewane, 2004; Von Kimakowitz, 2012).

The Harrod-Domar growth model provided the normative background for the reliance on GNP growth as a means of achieving development, which dominated development thinking throughout the 1950s. The model that was developed by Sir Roy Harrod in 1939 and Evsey Domar in 1946 is a growth model that states that the rate of economic growth in a country is dependent on the level of savings and the capital output ratio. It posits that a high level of saving in a country provides funds for firms to borrow and invest. Investment can increase the capital stock of an economy and generate economic growth through the increase in production of goods and services. The Harrod-Domar model argues that governments of developing countries need to encourage saving and support technological advancements to decrease the economy's capital output ratio to attain economic growth (Solow, 1956). This model inspired other theorists to further conceptualize on growth as a means of achieving development in the poor countries. Theories such as the Big

Push, balanced growth, development growth poles and the stages of growth theory by W.W. Rostow were born out of this growth model.

The Big Push theory developed by Rosenstein-Rodan in 1943 mainly argues that a comprehensive investment package, or big push, is necessary to generate economic growth. It holds the view that a huge amount of resources must be attributed to economic programs for such programs to produce the desired results. In other words, economies of scale will be achieved in underdeveloped countries if so many mutually supporting industries, which depend on each other, are created. The theory believes that even the simplest activity requires a network of other activities, and that individual firms cannot organize such a large network, so the state or some other giant agency must step in. However, the big push came to grief in the 1970s and 1980s as evidence accumulated that, in Africa at least, public investment and foreign aid had produced no perceptible change in productivity, not the least because so much of it was stolen. Recently, though, the idea has come back into vogue. At the UN, discussions always focus on its millennium development goals, and some scholars argue that if public investment and foreign aid are big enough, they will boost household incomes, spur savings and boost local investment. They should also “crowd in” external investment by improving infrastructure (The Economist, 2011).

Nurkse’s theory of balanced growth published in 1953 was geared towards eliminating structural underdevelopment, especially as it sees limited market opportunities as being the impediment to development. The theory identifies the shortage of real capital as the main bottleneck in economic development, and it is both the starting point and end of a causal chain. It requests that governments must mobilize all potential sources of capital for investment to be made. Nurkse sees development as simply being an extension of the market and increase in production that includes agriculture. The theory assumes that there is the willingness and ability for rational investment decisions in a traditional society. His diagnosis of ‘underdevelopment’ and policy suggestions are strictly confined to economics. His opus has been attacked for neglecting non-economic factors in development, such as failure to consider capital formation in education, skills and health (Bass, 2009).

The development pole theory elaborated by Perroux in 1950 suggests that economic growth, interregional equilibrium and integration of underdeveloped regions could be achieved through a strategy of decentralized development. The underlying assumption here is that beneficial spread effects would be generated from the induced poles to their peripheral areas. Perroux argued that growth does not occur everywhere at the same time but in points or growth poles with variable intensities. It is therefore from the growth poles that development spreads along different channels and would have spillover effects for the whole country or region (Serra, 2003).

The main argument of Rostow’s theory of stages of growth is that economic growth is based around a relatively short period of two or three decades — when the economy and the society of which it is a part transform themselves in such ways that economic growth is, subsequently, more or less automatic (Rostow, 1956). The theory describes five stages through which all societies pass and analyzes the long-term processes of economic development from an economic history perspective. Rostow assumes that the traditional society has 75% of the population working

in food production, and political power is wielded by landowners or a central authority that is backed by the army and state bureaucracy. This theory came under criticism because of its inability to explain why some countries witness progress and others not. It is a highly ethnocentric theory that does not give room for alternative goals and processes of development.

The growth theories that dominated the development debate throughout the 1940s and the 1950s viewed human beings as simply beneficiaries of development rather than as active participants in the development process itself. They have been criticized for not considering the human beings as the goal of development. The growth theories were pervasive in their discourse, and some scholars have questioned the main epistemological foundations of development from an essentially growth perspective.

The 1960's saw a new dawn in the development debate as scholars became increasingly convinced that financial or capital injection alone was not sufficient to set the expected development in motion in the world's poor countries. There was a revolution in development thinking, and most scholars found the need to accompany growth with change. This decade saw the emergence of modernization theorists who believed that poor countries needed solid political systems and that Eurocentric and America-centric forms of development could be replicated in the poor countries of the global south.

Modernization theorists believe that endogenous factors such as the absence of communication and infrastructure, traditional agrarian structure, illiteracy, and low division of labor account for the high degree of backwardness in the poor countries. They treat the industrialized countries as a model for society and economy and argue that a change of these internal factors is an appropriate strategy for development. Poor societies therefore have to embrace the modernization of production as a means of knowledge transfer and capital aid to achieve industrialization. Development according to theorists of this school of thought is perceived as a rise in production and efficiency measured mainly by a comparison of GNP.

In the late 1960s, the basic claims of the traditional neoclassical approach that the poorer countries were late in embarking on solid economic practices, and that as soon as they adopted the techniques of modern economics then poverty would begin to decline in these countries came under serious attack from dependency theorists mainly from Latin America. Dependency theory argued that poverty resulted from capitalist exploitation, and it was a consequence of the international political economy and the inflexible division of labor that favor the rich countries at the detriment of the poorer countries. Scholars such as Raul Prebisch argued that economic growth in the advanced industrialized countries did not necessarily lead to growth in the poorer countries but rather generated severe economic difficulties in them.

Such economic problems were attributed to the fact that poor countries exported primary commodities to the rich countries that then transformed them into finished products and sold them back to the poor countries. The finished products from the industrialized countries always cost more than the raw materials that they obtained from the poor countries. Poor countries only serve as suppliers of cheap minerals, agricultural commodities, and cheap labor as well as the repositories of surplus capital, obsolescent technologies, and manufactured goods. Dependency

theorists recommended that poor countries should embark on importing substitutions so to avoid buying expensive products from the advanced industrial nations. The dependency is built on the assumption that political and economic power are heavily concentrated and centralized in the rich countries.

Poor countries were integrated into international political economy under harsh terms as they tried to replicate the West and accept the growth prescriptions of Western economists. This resulted largely from the colonial heritage which was further exacerbated by the fact that the elites in the poor countries benefited strongly from their role as suppliers of primary goods to developed countries. Wallerstein's world system theory captures this core-periphery relationship succinctly whereby the industrialized countries constitute the core while the poorer countries were considered as the periphery. The core experienced rising levels of prosperity while the periphery served to satisfy the needs of the core (Von Kimakowitz, 2012).

The debate in the 1980s was dominated by the neoliberal doctrine that was championed by the Bretton Woods institutions with the expressed support of the highly industrialized nations. The neoliberal development thinking was initially conceived to be applied in the rich countries of the West. The neoliberal theory suggests that the market is more efficient than the state and would produce better outcomes, and therefore, the state should not intervene. The neoliberal thinking was based on the belief that unemployment was the product of the absence of flexibility in the labor market and suggested that states should embark on legislative reforms and not try to create jobs through management and industrial policy in order to increase labor market flexibility. Accordingly, states needed to rely on monetary policy rather than using fiscal policy to resolve problems of unemployment and to promote growth. It further suggested that states should deregulate and liberalize markets so that investors can hope to achieve the highest profits (Von Kimakowitz, 2012).

Neoliberalism was a political economy theory that was mainly driven by the belief that mankind can achieve better welfare by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2005). In the 1980s, the poorest countries, especially those in Africa, faced deep-seated economic problems and started experiencing structural problems. Faced with these difficulties, African states started seeking financial support from the World Bank, IMF and the EU. Neoliberal policies then began to be imposed on the poor countries around the world, especially as the industrialized countries became the main capital owners at the IMF and World Bank.

These policies are set by the Washington Consensus, which is a set of 10 free market economic ideas that emphasize the importance of macroeconomic stability and integration into the international economy and expansion of market forces within the domestic economy. In other words, a neo-liberal view of globalization or market fundamentalism. The 10 policy instruments included:

1. Low government borrowing to avoid large fiscal deficits relative to GDP;
2. Redirection of public spending from subsidies (especially indiscriminate subsidies) toward a broad-based provision of key pro-growth, pro-poor services like primary education, primary health care and infrastructure investment;
3. Tax reform, broadening the tax base and adopting moderate marginal tax rates;
4. Interest rates that are market determined and positive (but moderate) in real terms;
5. Competitive exchange rates;
6. Trade liberalization of imports, with an emphasis on elimination of quantitative restrictions (licensing, etc.) with any trade protection to be provided by low and relatively uniform tariffs;
7. Liberalization of inward foreign direct investment;
8. Privatization of state enterprises;
9. Deregulation or abolition of regulations that impede market entry or restrict competition, except for those justified for safety, environmental and consumer protection grounds, and prudential oversight of financial institutions;
10. Legal security for property rights.

The 10 points of the Washington Consensus were imposed as conditionality by the Bretton Wood institutions and other multilateral donors on the recipient poor countries. The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were designed with the aim of combating ever-rising inflation and achieving favorable balance of payments for the poorest economies especially African economies. The World Bank did not require poor countries to try to act directly on the balance of payments as this would be very difficult, but African countries were required to act directly on monetary and fiscal policies that they could control. It was hoped that through these conditions, reduced inflation would increase investment that was necessary for economic recovery in Africa. Governments were required to cut spending, liberalize domestic markets, reform their tax systems and reduce trade barriers (Ewane, 2004; Siebold, 1996).

The IMF stabilization policies that focused on restoring the external sector balances failed to produce the expected effect in most countries that implemented them, and this approach to prosperity came under serious attacks from multilateral bodies such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Inflation remained high and poverty levels rose in most of Latin America and Africa. Many African countries never experienced measurable progress years after implementing the SAPs, rather most of them entered a period of decline and experienced unfavorable trade balances (Ogbonna, 2012).

Since the early 1990s, the IMF and World Bank have been recommending good governance in all aspects of public life in the poor countries as a condition for aid. The main idea has been to enhance transparency in policy decisions and improve accountability on the use of public finances and procedures. Poor states have since been compelled to shape their national

policies to create policy and institutional landscapes that will facilitate their integration into the global market.

The current development debate adopts a human rights-based approach to development that seeks to empower both the beneficiaries of development while, at the same time, making them participants in the development process. The right to development (RTD) requires greater accountability from all actors in the development process: through legal, administrative, or political mechanisms, individuals, as right-holders, can make claims on the conduct of individual and collective agents, including states, which, as duty-holders, can be held responsible for not meeting their obligations. The RTD was first proclaimed by the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU) and was included in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1981. In 1986, the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (DRTD) was adopted and was later reaffirmed in the 1993 Vienna and 2000 UN Millennium Declarations (Piron, 2002).

The debate on the RTD was highly politicized between the poor and the rich countries. Most of the agreements reached in the various development fora have not always been replicated by the Commission on Human Rights. The Independent Expert on the Right to Development has made positive contributions to the debate by proposing a development compact that may lead to a politically acceptable solution. The 'compact' may need to be further defined in a manner consistent with current best practice or presented as a theoretical framework to guide real partnership agreements. The most controversial element of the RTD lies in the international implementation of the right. In the past, it was seen by some as giving rise to an obligation of developed states and international organizations to provide development assistance to developing states. However, such a human rights obligation of a legally binding nature cannot be grounded in international law. The current controversy surrounds the process of globalization, the equal participation of developing countries in that process, and its relation to human rights (Piron, 2002).

The human rights-based approach to development overlaps with the question concerning local ownership of the process of development. Local ownership to development involves the use of indigenous knowledge of the people in the communities where development projects are taking place. This process emphasizes local ownership as a critical component for achieving development in the world's poorest countries. It builds on the argument that a more localized development practice where people have a stake empowers the people and gives them a sense of belongingness rather than disconnecting them from the process of development (The World Bank, 2004).

The debate as elaborated above has completely ignored African indigenous knowledge in the search for solutions to the continent's seemingly intractable development challenges. However, more and more scholars are recognizing today that rural people have always maintained a certain formidable power that guides their indigenous institutions and knowledge systems thereby maintaining some level of reliance (Donnelly-Roark, 2004). Therefore, the disposition of the donor community to regularize indigenous knowledge in the form of inclusion of local voices and priorities (Briggs and Sharp, 2004) into development projects emanates in the power relations between indigenous and donor participation in the development practice. In contrast to the past where indigenous knowledge was an obstacle to development, it is now seen as pivotal to achieving

development in Africa ((Briggs & Sharp, 2004). To expatiate the perspective of indigenous knowledge as a cultural capital that conditions development thinking, planning and delivery, we provide an analysis of the theory of habitus in the next section to provide a foundation for the subsequent section on situating indigenous knowledge in development practice.

Bourdieu's Concept of Habitus

The concept of "habitus" was developed within Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. In the *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, he draws our attention to the social conditions of scientific practice by developing a theory that, on the one hand, critiques the foundation of social science and on the other hand, accounts for a theory of practice that argues that there exists relatively autonomous structured fields, which have a structuring capacity and function in accordance with rigorous mechanism of cultural and social reproduction which is capable of imposing their necessity on agents (Bourdieu, 1977).

The autonomous structured field is described as the *doxa* (or the field) in which agents tacitly accord by the mere fact of acting in accordance with social convention. These, in Bourdieu's understanding, are the always existing obligatory boundaries of experiential context that are "a relational obligation endowed with a specific gravity which it imposes on all the objects and agents which enter it" (Bourdieu in Adams, 2006, p. 514). The acting in accord with social convention is the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). The habitus, in this respect, emerges from explicit action of inculcation producing a system of rules such as grammars and rhetoric, and defines the right ways to put the rules into practices as *repertoire* of devices or techniques. Adams (2006) notes that the field instantiates us as subjects and reproduces social distinctions via the enactment of habitus.

The concept of habitus was formulated by Bourdieu to overcome the pernicious dualism between objectivism and subjectivity, exemplified in France by Levi-Strauss and Sartre (King, 2000; Lau, 2004; Asimaki & Koustourakis, 2014). For Bourdieu, the concept captures and encapsulates the dialectics of objectivism and subjectivism by inscribing subjective, bodily actions with objective social forces so that the most apparent subjective individual acts take on social meaning (King, 2000). The habitus is thus internalized history and a 'structure' 'structured' by conditions of the relevant social (class, group, institutional) milieu (Lau, 2004). The concept is built on Bourdieu's objectivist perspective which specifies the mechanism that links structural conditioning to social practice and regularities (Lau, 2004). It thus comprises two sides: as structured structure and as structuring structure.

In this regard, habitus emerges as a conceptual tool suitable for explaining actions within a social field where a dynamic interplay of struggles produces history (Chandler, 2013). Thus, agency and autonomy are incorporated in the concept of habitus through personal and collective accumulated history that imprints them as *pre-reflective* action-orientation (Adams, 2006). This generative capacity of habitus makes it function as both 'the structure of the field' and 'structured by the field' leading to enduring transferable patterns of the social world. In this usage, habitus is a collective practical sense of objective possibilities that force the shape of the field providing the

pattern through which thoughts and action are produced. Accordingly, Bourdieu submits that practices that are generated by habitus follow a practical logic of practice:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structure predisposed to functioning as structuring structures, that is as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcome without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 53).

The concept of habitus thus stresses that human action can be “coherent without springing from an intention of coherence and deliberate decision; adjusted to the future without being the product of a project of a plan” (Elder-Vass, 2007, p. 326). As the set of dispositions inculcate in each of us by the conditioning that follows from our social environment (Elder-Vass, 2007), it conceals in its function *symbolic power* and through its capacities ensures the reproduction of itself as a self-regulating system compelling a lasting relation of domination established in the system.

According to Lau, habitus emerges horizontally from its structural conditions; it is what it is because these conditions are what they are, and not vice versa (Lau, 2004). The objective and prior cultural and structural features of a society, which were referred to by Bourdieu as the *opus operatum*, meaning the work which has been done, are beyond humans while the *modus operandu* are the practical strategies which an individual adopts (King, 2000). In this regard, Bourdieu sees society not only as consisting of interactions between individuals, but also as dialectics between practice and structure (King, 2000). He therefore appeals to the concept of *habitus* according to which society consists of objective structure and determines — and isolated—individuals (King, 2000).

The suggestion that the *operation* of habitus is subconscious has been criticized by several scholars (Elder-Vass, 2007). Bourdieu (1977) constrains the role of conscious thought in human action by arguing that habitus acts within the agents as the organizing principle of their actions and that this *modus operandi* informing every thought and action reveals itself only in the *opus operatum*. In the operation, habitus is seen as possessing emergent causal mechanism irreducible to structural and individual manipulation. Elder-Vass (2007) noted that the omission of conscious thought from the development of our dispositions is untenable as a general claim since “Many (though certainly not all) of our dispositions seem to be *learned* quite consciously via explicit verbal instructions, rather than being absorbed and embodied subconsciously” (p. 327). Therefore, Bourdieu neglects the role of conscious thought in both the development and the operation of habitus (Elder-Vass, 2007). The concept was thus heavily criticized for offering less substance for comprehending the complexity that comprises individuality of the agent (Chandler, 2013; Elder-Vass, 2007).

King criticizes the concept of habitus as being incompatible with Bourdieu’s practical theory and slips back exactly into the kind of objectivism Bourdieu refutes (2000). According to

King, “much of what Bourdieu describes under the name of ‘practical theory’ and which he believes justified the concept of the habitus is, in fact, quite radically incompatible with habitus (King, 2000) because: one, it fails to provide an explanation of social change, and two, it reduces social reproduction to the mechanical imposition of prior social structure onto individuals thereby returning to the very systemic image of social life which Bourdieu initially rejected in his critique of the structuralist account of gift exchange. Therefore, critics of the concept have mainly argued that the notion of habitus does not resolve the subject-object dualism of social theory which Bourdieu intends to do, but, in fact, relapses against Bourdieu’s intention into the very objectivism which he rejects. Despite this, King noted that Bourdieu’s contribution to the agency-structure debate cannot be completely dismissed.

The importance of Bourdieu’s contribution to social theory has driven other commentators to argue that Bourdieu has gone a long way toward overcoming the dualism of structure and agency by presenting a genuine advance in social theory (Crossley, 2001; King, 2000). Chandler (2013) argues that the dynamism, or the potency for change and individuality, of the agent, saturated by cultural capital, derives from being built of an economy of interest working strategically *within* the agent, which is very similar to Bourdieu’s ‘economy of practices’ comprising various fields of struggle. In this regard, the principle of our action is naturally practically emergent from experience. Lau dispensed Bourdieu’s myriad description of the concept specifying three inter-linked components for it: belief-premises, perception-appreciation, and a descriptive and prescriptive practical sense of objective possibilities and of the forthcoming for its operationalization (Lau, 2004).

In this article, we follow Bourdieu’s conceptualization of habitus as a practical sense emergent from experience. The embedment of ‘local ownership’ in the structure of global development thinking, planning and delivery is analyzed as emergent in the habitual practices of a development project. In other words, the disposition to indigenous knowledge in development practice is an internalized understanding and experiences of the both of “donor- and “receiving-community” that have emerged from development practices. These practices evolve habitual through a complex renegotiation of relations between the “donor” and “receiving-community”, or to the agents, and leaves room for the transformation of both parties.

Situating Indigenous Knowledge in Development Practice in Africa

“Indigenous knowledge is an integral part of the culture and history of a local community. We need to learn from local communities to enrich the development process.”

James D. Wolfensohn, World Bank President (In Gope et al., 2017)

This section firstly illustrates indigenous knowledge, being the idea of ‘local ownership’ in development, as a ‘cultural capital’ used for resisting wholesale imposition of development ideas. We argue that the elitist, top-down approach to development that relies on the application of modern science, technology and expert knowledge held outside Africa for the continent’s development is epistemologically flawed. African perspectives on development have been greatly

impacted by indigenous cultural traditions and the sense of place, and this makes it relevant for African development values to be invoked in the quest for finding a lasting solution to the continent's development crisis. This argument is inspired by the theory of habitus with the hope of generating objective possibilities to overcome the development insufficiencies experienced in most parts of Africa through the application of indigenous knowledge.

According to the World Bank (1998), there is no all-encompassing definition of indigenous knowledge systems. From a strictly Western perspective, the term indigenous is often associated with being primitive, wild and natural (Dei, 1999). Indigenous knowledge (IK) is the local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society (Zageye & Bamba, 2006). IK contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities (Warren, 1991). Indigenous knowledge can equally be defined as being the information base for a society, which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous information systems are dynamic and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems (Flavier, 1995).

Kok (2005) posits that knowledge systems generally are systems through which people make sense of and attach meaning to the world in which they live. These views and perceptions originate within a specific community or culture and are handed down from generation to generation, resulting in personal experiences and wisdom being transferred to younger people. These knowledge systems reflect the dynamic way in which the residents of a community come to understand themselves in relation to their natural environment, and how they organize that knowledge of flora, fauna, cultural beliefs and history to enhance their lives (Bray & Els, 2007).

According to Gorjestani (2004), indigenous knowledge is an essential element of the social capital of the poor and constitutes their main asset in their efforts to achieve control of their own lives. It forms the base of the knowledge system of any country and encompasses the skills, experiences and insights of people applied to maintain or improve their livelihoods (World Bank, 2004). For these reasons, the potential contribution of indigenous knowledge to locally managed, sustainable and cost-effective survival strategies should be promoted in the development process.

Generally, the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in development practice is based on the claim that the Western knowledge dominated scientific path for underdevelopment in non-Western societies has failed to achieve its claim of capability to deliver these countries from their development problems. We, therefore, see the need for local participation to help break the impasse. However, the persistence of an indigenous knowledge system itself can also be a reflection of its capacity in holistically resisting modernity. Its forcibility as a part of a covert response to the destabilizing flux of modernity is noted by Fanon (1963). Therefore, its invocation in development practice forges a corporeal disposition that makes up development practices. The appeal to indigenous knowledge in this regard is seen through the capacity to renew itself as one of the forces for achieving development in Africa.

The World Bank (1998) identifies three levels of relevance of indigenous knowledge that may be within the process of sustainable development: the first level is the local community where the bearers of such knowledge live and produce; second is the various development agents such as governments, donors, local leaders and private sector initiatives. These agents recognize indigenous knowledge, value it and appreciate it in their interaction with the local communities. However, before incorporating it in their approaches, they need to understand it and critically validate it against the usefulness for their intended objectives; third, the global knowledge level ensures that indigenous knowledge forms part of global knowledge and in this context, it has a value and relevance in itself. Accordingly, indigenous knowledge can be conserved, transferred, or adopted and adapted elsewhere.

The acceptance of African indigenous knowledge in development practice is an effort in the way of finding the most suitable approach to resolving Africa's enduring development challenges. In this process the indigenous knowledge asserts its relevance in an institutional configuration that tends to suppress it. Local knowledge acts as a force that determines how development is conducted in specific localities. In this regard, the assumption that Western knowledge provides the only route, i.e. as superior to other knowledge, to development is confronted by indigenous knowledge's determinative capacity. Die states that "indigenous knowledge, as local participation, is a resistance to historic and continuing dominance of Western practice of development" (2014, p. 16). Therefore, the force of indigenous knowledge creates a space for itself in the development field.

In this regard, the indigenous epistemic system and the Western model are seen as endowed with the same principle of achieving a satisfactory end whereby they are organized in relation to each other in the field of development. About 60% of the African population, for instance, lives in rural areas where they depend largely on their indigenous worldviews to solve problems that affect their wellbeing and social development (Shiza & Abdi, 2014). The contending issues are, however, whether African indigenous knowledge is transformational or whether modernity (Western knowledge) will consume it over time in the search for solutions to development challenges.

The choice of African indigenous knowledge derives from a strictly normative standpoint that inclusiveness of a decision-making process determined by the requirements of survival is conditional and self-defeating. The issue of development in Africa is one of survival, and therefore development policies must be conceived in a way that will not exclude the choices and knowledge of the Africans themselves. Dei (2014) maintains that a critique of the Western discursive approach to African development should be pursued as an anti-colonial and anti-racist intellectuality to reclaim and recover indigenous knowledge.

For some scholars the focus on indigenous knowledge has been in answering the question related to whether African countries should establish endogenous localized political systems and structures to form centralized and powerful governments that contribute to promoting economic prosperity, improved living conditions, transparent parliamentary systems and social stability based on the Western political ideology (Liu, 2013). Research has equally devoted attention to the question of whether it is necessary to establish a powerful government that can effectively channel

national resources in joint efforts to achieve the state's long-term development goals, or to establish a weak government that only pursues its own immediate interests or partial interests and thus, leads to continuous mutually exclusive cut-throat competition.

We explore the role of indigenous knowledge in health care in Burkina Faso to elaborate its relevance as a valuable and inevitable resource in Africa's development process while at the same time show how this resource can be exploited to help people on the continent take control of their own lives. This presents a counter-hegemonic perspective of indigenous knowledge whereby development can best be understood and achieved if the indigenous people are encouraged to drive their development process by focusing on reinforcing their indigenous epistemic systems. Our choice of the healthcare sector derives from the fact that the development discourse has for too long focused on achieving economic prosperity while paying little attention to social development. We argue that the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in social projects will greatly increase the possibility of such projects to impact positively on the lives of the poor masses in Africa. This is particularly true because most of Africa's population live in the rural areas and most of them depend on indigenous knowledge to obtain a means of livelihood.

Indigenous Knowledge and Healthcare

Scientific innovation and technological advancement in medical research have led to a remarkable increase in life expectancy, eradication of some diseases and a significant drop in mortality around the world. These developments notwithstanding, a large portion of the world's people still do not have access to essential drugs. In areas where modern medicine is not readily available, the people resort to the use of traditional medicine which is easy to find at affordable costs. Almost 80% of Africa's people do not have access to regular medicine and resort to the use of traditional medicine for their medical needs. It was in recognition of this fact that the World Health Organization in 2000 adopted the resolution on "Promoting the Role of Traditional Medicine in the Health System: A Strategy for the African Region" (Xiaorui, 2004).

Most of the plants used in traditional medicine have great biological and therapeutic potential and can be used in the treatment of common diseases such as coughs, diarrhea and fever. Considering this, the value added of traditional medicine development strategies should focus on promoting the growth of this local knowledge and enhancing consultation with indigenous practitioners to facilitate the treatment of some diseases (An, 2004). However, this knowledge is often exploited by big capital wielding pharmaceutical companies who patent the products.

In Burkina Faso, the government has taken measures to exploit and develop indigenous medicine as a means of improving healthcare delivery in the country. The Ministry of Health has created a Department of Pharmaceutical Services and Traditional Pharmacopoeia in order to establish a policy for developing a traditional medicine pharmacopoeia throughout the country. The first decision by the department was to develop traditional pharmacopoeia at the regional level that met regularly to exchange experiences gained in the field. Traditional therapist and herbalist organizations have been established in major cities around the country and regulations have been put in place to supervise the practice of traditional medicine in Burkina Faso. The country that is

also heavily afflicted by the AIDS epidemic is using traditional pharmacopoeia as a substitute of the expensive antiretroviral drugs in the fight against the disease. The government is helping to develop traditional medicine as a necessary supplement to the existing medical care provided for all segments of society by the medical centres of the country (Dakuyo, 2004).

The example of Burkina Faso is a clear indication that indigenous knowledge is essential to economic growth and must be an integral part of Africa's development process. The use of traditional pharmacopoeia and the creation of support networks for traditional healers are contributing to the effectiveness and sustainability of the country's healthcare system. These kinds of indigenous knowledge practices can be integrated in many other sectors in order to boost the continent's prospects of achieving prosperity without having to rely on knowledge held elsewhere. The experience of Burkina Faso is testimony to the fact that indigenous knowledge represents a precious, invisible link between regions and cultures, its resources and the store of experiences nurtured by the specialists in the community (Ndenecho, 2011). The knowledge held by these traditional or native healers represent what Bourdieu (1994) refers to as cultural capital which can exist in three forms: incorporated form, objectified state and institutionalized form.

However, reliance on indigenous knowledge in the health sector is not without challenges. One of the greatest challenges is that indigenous knowledge in Burkina Faso, like in most parts of the continent, is still greatly influenced by rituals and customary practices, some of which are gradually disappearing. More so, the high rates of illiteracy in some countries on the continent could result in most work based on indigenous knowledge not being accessed by the local populations, and thus leading to the researchers knowing more than the local populations. Burkina Faso, as well as many other African countries, is facing rapid biodiversity loss, and this might result in practices and knowledge related to fauna or flora being lost. To effectively address such threats to indigenous knowledge, African states would need to enact stringent measures that aim to protect natural habitats and ecosystems in order to guarantee continuous access to scientific knowledge.

The preference of the dominant modern Western systems of learning and scientific investigation is rapidly destroying these indigenous knowledge systems, especially in the healthcare sector in Africa (Gareth, 2000). It is imperative to incorporate African traditional medicine (social capital) into the formal healthcare systems of African countries. This can be achieved through ethnopharmacology, which can help identify indigenous medicinal plants that are safe and effective. However, this would require that Western donors or pharmaceutical companies respect the intellectual property rights of the traditional healers. In line with the theory of habitus, modern medical technology can serve to describe, analyze, validate and classify the native beliefs and processes of the traditional knowledge systems. Gareth (2000) argues that such validation using new techniques would help to confirm the difficult process of observation, analysis, and evaluation that determines every individual's culture. The validation may also represent the basic point of reference in the process of exchange between the donors' modern medicine and the local African traditional doctor (Neba, 2011).

Conclusion

The indigenous knowledge underpinning of resistance to dominating Western knowledge has been argued through its persistence in development practice. Its persistence evolved habitually through a complex renegotiation of power relations between the donor- and receiving-community, which leaves room for the transformation of development space. In the struggle to resolve the enduring puzzle of development in Africa, the role of indigenous knowledge is thus affirmed as important. We argue that the importance of indigenous knowledge in development practice is in its capacity to generate transferable local skills and set energies in motion to reduce the prevailing inequalities on the continent. Therefore, the article advocates for a paradigm shift in development thinking and practice that reinforces the use of indigenous knowledge as a first line of action in the process of development.

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