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#CODESRIA14

**Creating African Futures in an Era of Global Transformations:**

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**Créer l'Afrique de demain dans un contexte de transformations mondialisées :**

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**Criar Futuros Africanos numa Era de Transformações Globais:**

**Desafios e Perspetivas**

**بعث أفريقيا الغد في سياق التحولات المعولمة :**

**رهانات و آفاق**

**Harnessing the Empowerment Nexus of Afropolitanism and Higher Education:  
Purposeful Fusion for Africa's Social Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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**CODESRIA**

**08 - 12 June / Juin 2015**

**Dakar, Senegal**



## Introduction

The global circulation of ideas and people of African descent has stimulated the discussion of the concept of Afropolitanism. This has potential benefits for both the continent and its peoples when envisioning and actualizing national and continental projects for social progress. Exposure to other models of higher education and the potential benefits to the host countries have awakened the need to consider the transformation of higher education policies in the continent for visible and sustainable development in Africa. This has become an area of mutual interest to the Afropolitans and other interested parties. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in, as well as numerous debates on the concept, representations and manifestations of Afropolitanism.

Most of the debates have been centered on the meanings of the concept of Afropolitanism, as well as the profiles, locations and connections of the Afropolitans vis-à-vis the African continent. The discourse has been guided by the quest for social transformation geared toward social progress on the African continent. For decades, starting from the time that African countries began to be independent in the 1950s, Africans have articulated the idea, and advocated for policies, of developmental higher education, with a focus on the university. In the context of the re-emergence of the popular human capital theory, there has been consensus among policymakers and the population at large on unleashing human capabilities for socio-economic development by means of higher education.

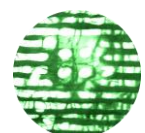
Recently, Afropolitanism has been associated with the search for better opportunities for education, socio-economic attainment, and in some cases human security, by the people of African origin navigating the global world. Institutions of higher learning, within and outside the continent, have directly or indirectly contributed to the making of the Afropolitan. Thus, formal education in general, and particularly higher education, has been identified as a trigger for increasing Afropolitanism, especially with the emergence of the cyberspace. The concept and practical aspects of Afropolitanism have included territoriality, border as imagined and/or part of physical geography, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the globally mobile people in contributing to development agendas on the continent. The experiences and connections to the multiplicity of institutions and realities lead to the deliberate conceptualization, design and implementation of policies. This can be actualized with purposeful fusion of the multiplicities of sources and types of knowledge and experiences grounded on African cultural foundation to promote structural transformation for social progress.

The purpose of this paper is to contribute further to the clarification of the theoretical issues and policy possibilities in using the interface and guided convergence of Afropolitanism and higher education toward the actual utilization of human capacity that higher education helps to set forth towards Africa's advancement. This paper is a reflective essay and also a framework for policy using historical approaches to analyze various scenarios of planned change for guided convergence of the role of higher education and Afropolitanism.





The paper is divided into three major headings. The first section articulates the issues of definition of the concept of Afropolitanism and its historical connections. The second section deals with the relationship between formal education, especially higher education and migration, and thus as a trigger of creating and shaping Afropolitanism. The third section focuses on possible policies for a better utilization of financial and human resources connected to the people of African descent in the Diaspora, particularly on revitalization of higher education on the continent.



## **1. Afropolitanism: Conceptual Clarifications and Historical Context**

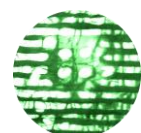
The concept of “Afropolitanism,” or its derived term “Afropolitan,” has not yet become a popular subject of intellectual engagement, especially in scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles. Yet, it is evocative and provocative and has been the subject of recent exchanges on the Internet and begs to be also thoroughly interrogated and problematized in academia and all spheres of intellectual discourses and actions.

An article by Taiye Tuakli-Wosornu (2005), after a tour de force, presents a condensed form of the profiles of a group of people representing the reality of Afropolitanism:

They (read: we) are Afropolitans – the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/jazz lounge near you. You’ll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic or two, we understand some indigenous tongue and speak a few urban vernaculars. There is at least one place on The African Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city (Ibadan), or an auntie’s kitchen. Then there’s the G8 city or two (or three) that we know like the backs of our hands, and the various institutions that know us for our famed focus. We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world.

Binyavanga Wainaina (2012) challenged this concept in a presentation entitled “I am a Pan-Africanist, not an Afropolitan” at the 2012 conference that was jointly organized by the African Studies Association of the UK and the Leeds University Center of African Studies (LUAS). In support of Wainaina, Stephanie Santana wrote in “Exorcizing Afropolitanism: Binyavanga Wainaina explains why “I am a Pan-Africanist, not an Afropolitan” at ASAUK 2012”:

When I told Katie Reid of AiW that Wainaina’s lecture was haunting me, she suggested that “Africa in Words” might be an ideal space to “exorcise” these spirits. It turns out that Katie’s idea was more fitting than I first realized. Wainaina’s address was a kind of exorcism in its own right, an attempt to rid African literary and cultural studies of the ghost of Afropolitanism, a term that perhaps once held promise as a new theoretical lens and important counterweight to Afro-pessimism, but that has increasingly come to stand for empty style and culture commodification.



The comfortable usage of the term and the challenges of the critics are articulated on different levels. In an effort to translate the meanings and respective positions of those engaged in the argumentation, it is worthwhile to first recall that a concept can be defined by both what it is as well as what it is not. Thus, it is worth asking whether beyond the signifier the signified from the different perspective is indeed different or in fact close in meaning.

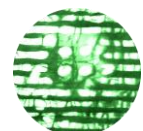
Of particular significance in the articulation of Afropolitanism are the elements of geography, territoriality, and location. Another critical component of the definition is agency and deliberate identification with the African continent and its people. Of particular importance is the positive affirmation and reclaiming of this connection and an expression of constructive agency in actualizing the relationship.

While espousing the term, some have questioned the suggestion that it supposes outward mobility and location in or at least significant connection with a space other than the African continent. Thus, some have argued that the African urban centers where people from various spaces characterized by a relative parochialism converge should also be a space for Afropolitanism.

Etymologically, Afropolitanism derives from a combination of Africa and the Greek term “polis” which means city with connotations of citizenship as was historically the case with the Greek city-states, which constituted the ground for the articulation of those who belonged and those who were not. In the same Greek tradition, the subsequent idea of metropolis or metropolitan/ism suggested a nexus of territoriality and complexity with the convergence and functioning of various social institutions including educational, economic, political and cultural organization. This is not to argue that the idea and reality of the complex human settlement originated from Greece, since, as history will attest that the Nile Valley civilization produced such reality that preceded the Greek city-state formations. What is acknowledged here is the use of the terms and its etymological connection.

In the experience of African countries in the colonial context, the representation of assumed “civilized” that suggests sophisticated spaces where the colonizers came from was associated with metropolis concomitant with complexity and a burgeoning culture in comparison to the assumed “simplicity” and parochial reality of the colonized space and people.

Thus, the assumption that Afropolitanism is necessarily connected to a location outside the continent may reflect some of this history and constitute grounds for some of the criticism. If the etymology of “polis” is strictly observed, then the point that out of Africa connection is not necessary should be taken seriously. As suggested above, one of the notions associated with Afropolitanism is agency and positive connection to the continent. However, in analyzing the various populations of African descent in the Diaspora, there are nuances that ought to be brought in the analysis by factoring in the historical context of the African





migration. It is crucial to recall the presence in the Western Hemisphere of people African descent from the experience of forced migration in the context of the Trans-Atlantic enslavement. The Diaspora in these spaces has become more complex as a result of more recent waves, most of which is considered to be voluntary.

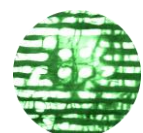
In analyzing the relationship between forced emigrants and the continent, considering all the complex factors involved, Skinner (1982: 17) for instance points out that these relations are inevitably full of contradicting forces. Therefore, there are simultaneous forces that keep the lines alive, and the forces of latent rejection given the context of the forced separation. He states:

Relations between peoples in diasporas and their ancestral homelands are complex and full of dialectical contradictions. First, there is anger, bitterness and remorse among the exiles -and often among the people at home- over the weaknesses that permitted the dispersion to occur. Second, there is conflict when the dominant hosts attempt to justify the subordinate status of the exiles, and the latter, in turn, refuse to accept the status thrust upon them.

From the perspective of the individual human experience, given the trauma involved in slavery, there are sentiments of ambivalence towards the African culture that could not decisively prevent the tragedy from happening on such a scale and for so long. Ironically, this same culture is what could constitute the last refuge, the only possession that provided them with some hope. A number of socio-historical factors in both societies contribute to the emergence of particular positions or attitudes of the exiles, their offspring, and subsequent generations, towards the original homes. The economic and political conditions in the destination country and in the homeland, push or repress the expression of the desire to return physically or spiritually, or to connect to the mother-society through various means. The expression of the need to return is stronger and more open when the actual and/or perceived conditions in the initial home are positive and attractive, especially if at the same time the conditions in the receiving country are negative and tend to reject the migrants, whether the latter were voluntarily or forcefully relocated.

In recent experiences with migrations, many Africans have also left the continent against their will as they had to flee for their physical security, for instance. While the idea of free will is complex and what may appear as such may be induced by subtle or obvious indirect and direct push factors, political refugees living outside the continent constitute part of this group. Even if they too may experience some of the ambiguity and complexity of the relationship to the homeland that Skinner (1982) articulates, there are powerful factors that sustain the relationship, especially given the recent departure.

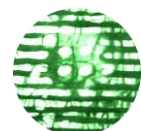
Afropolitanism is a recently coined concept. Its forerunner, PanAfricanism, was more popularly accepted across the board regardless of class and geography. The Afropolitan critic Wianaina (2012) adheres to it with more comfort.



PanAfricanism developed within the context of the suffering African people beginning with the slave trade, slavery in the diaspora and colonialism on the continent and the struggle to restore dignity and resume the process for social progress. In his book entitled *PanAfricanism or Communism*, George Padmore (1971) explained that although Dubois gave a special meaning to PanAfricanism, many others did express the need for PanAfrican perspectives in the struggle of African people. For example, the lawyer Henry Sylvester Williams among other African people from the Caribbean, lived in London at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of this century. While he was a student, he met and developed relations with students from West Africa (Ghana, the Gambia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone) who felt that African people had a common struggle. In 1900, the year the Ashanti territory was conquered by the British and Queen Yaa Asantewa was sent into exile and the land appreciation in South Africa was imposed, Williams decided to organize a PanAfrican conference in London to inform public opinion on the British atrocities in Africa. The message of Marcus Garvey, regarding the Africans in the Diaspora, focused on the return to Africa with dignity. The PanAfricanists who directly influenced African students and future leaders and contributed to shape the organization of the struggle for liberation in African countries under European colonial rule were W. E. B. Dubois and George Padmore. Dubois gave a specific impetus to PanAfrican consciousness, particularly through a series of PanAfrican congresses, most of which were held in Europe.

PanAfricanism in essence ignores, or at least aims at eliminating the various forms of boundaries between the African people. However, African people had de facto functioned within the physical, legal and cultural boundaries created by the European powers from the Atlantic slave trade to formal colonization of the continent. For practical reasons, various types of social movements, political parties, students organizations, including those with a strong ideology for the unity of African people and the most radical students organizations functioned within those boundaries. Thus, on the continent, there were associations of students from black Africa, students from North Africa. The associations of students from Black Africa were divided further into francophone and anglophone groups. These groups were divided in smaller sub-units representing the individual colonies, and so forth. Nevertheless, the goal of PanAfricanism was the same throughout, and included the struggle for the liberation and progress for the race, the continent, people of African descent everywhere, as well as the element of class, which transcends race.

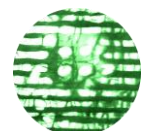
Taking a closer look at the critical perspective and preferred usage of PanAfricanism, for instance, there appears to be a point of convergence that is agency and commitment to the continent. There is clearly the articulation of the element of glamour and flashy appearance, but a careful analysis of the emphasis on the youthful feature of the Afropolitan, reveals a history of earlier generations that articulated PanAfricanism in their youth.



More generally, African students pursuing higher education in Europe played significant roles in the anti-colonial struggle. In their determination to make an impact, it became critical for them to organize. It is worth recalling the cases of North Africa, “Association des *Étudiants Musulmans d'Afrique du Nord*- Association of Muslim Students of North Africa” which was formed in 1912 in Algiers and in 1927 became Association des *Étudiants Musulmans Nord-Africains* (Association of North African Muslim Students with its headquarters in Paris. Also in 1927, the West African Student Association (W.A.S.U.) was formed in London by students from West African British colonies which aimed first at addressing issues pertaining to student life but became a political platform contribution to the struggle for decolonization. Of particular interest was organization that initially focused on the identity and political implications. It was Black identity “*Négritude*” (Black identity), that led Leopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, Aimé Césaire of Martinique, and Léon Gontran Damas of French Guyana to establish the journal of “*l'Étudiant Noir*” (The Black Student) although it did not lead to political development. In contrast, students from French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa, Cameroon Togo a clearly political organization, *Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France*-FEANF (Federation of Students from Black Africa in France) headquartered Paris (Dieng, 2009). With its motto of “integration to the masses” anywhere was an engagement organization.

Amilcar Cabral and Agostino Neto were among the very few citizens of the countries colonized by Portugal who had the opportunity to study abroad, precisely in Portugal, in the 1940's. It was within the context of students associations that led later to the creation PAIGC in Guinea Bissau and MPLA for Angola created by NETO. In Mozambique, Mondlane had a deferent path, as he studied in the U.S. where he was highly visible but not within an association like in Europe. However, on the whole they organized students associations, which led decolonization movements.

In the contemporary context, whether the term Afropolitanism or PanAfricanism is used, in both terms the idea of agency and commitment to promote positive transformation and social progress constitute a primary common ground in defining the relationship to the continent. However, given the historical context, PanAfricanism connotes more “serious” engagement in political terms to the liberation of the African continent and people. In the next section, I will briefly present the role of formal education in the making of the contemporary global Africans, whether they are referred to within Afropolitanism, PanAfricanism or other terms.





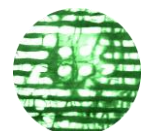
## **2. Education as a Trigger of Migration and the role of Higher Education in the Making of the Global African**

In the recent history of colonial education establishment throughout the African continent, regardless of the specificities of the different colonial powers, in practical terms the conceptualization, design and implementation of these schools regarding the physical and symbolic locations reflected the conception of dualism constructed between the indigenous space/people and the metropolis. For the African youth in the colonial context, whether they went to school against their will (in the beginning of colonial rule) or willingly (in the latter phase of colonial rule), attending the European school in the African villages, towns or cities was practically and figuratively an exercise in living the reality or imagined distance between the African controlled space and the microcosm of the European space in the African land.

When the European education was finally adopted by the Africans, the idea and practical reality of pursuing an educational career to be completed in the European metropolis was well established. From the time when school was an instrument for uprooting and transplanting the African child the miniature space to the search for higher education opportunities overseas, the tradition had been set. Furthermore, the psychological and physical distance between what represented the African reality versus the distant European reality, was reinforced and increased by formal education, especially at the higher education level. Thus it was introduced and functioned as a trigger of migration, thus contributing to the relocation of at least an important group of the global Africans who constitute the core of the Afropolitan, especially as they are defined above and described as characterized by “academic successes” (Tuakli-Wosornu, 2005).

In the context of TransAtlantic Enslavement and colonization, there has been more than a century of the role of higher education in the making of the Afropolitan. In the African indigenous systems of governance, gerontocracy whereby older people had more voice and responsibility was widespread. In the colonial era, following these aspects African tradition older people constituted the key decision-makers and were at the forefront of the struggle against colonial rule. However, no matter how hard they fought and organized to counter the colonial forces, found themselves with relatively limiting means in the context of the forcibly Europeanizing African societies.

Thus, the responsibility to challenge these colonial powers fell, although in collaboration with the older people, on the shoulders of the younger generations. The younger generations attended colonial schools, often by force and forcibly acquired new competences: speaking, reading and writing of the European languages and knowing in depth the European/Western, by travelling to and living in their societies. This way they acquired new skills to assume mighty political responsibilities, which made them, earn many attributes in the struggle for independence and the efforts of nation building in Africa, as explained in the first section of this paper. Some of the historical eloquent illustrations include figures such as Nnamdi Azikiwe (first President of Nigeria) and Kwame Nkrumah



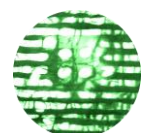
(first President of Ghana), who both studied at Lincoln University in the United States and strengthened their PanAfrican commitment in this experience.

Thus, since the colonial era, the economy and the European type of formal education have constituted powerful triggers of and incentives for the migration of Africans further away from home. In essence, European formal education socialized the Africans to move further and further away from their communities. For instance, in the French education system, figuratively and literally, school going children moved on a daily basis between two sociological realities, and eventually would move from the village schools to the regional schools, then on to the urban school in their respective countries and for the few highest achievers, onward to the federal schools in West Africa or Central Africa. From the time of decolonization to date, going further to pursue higher education in the metropolis conferred the badge of success with the highest honor. As a consequence, formal education, especially at the higher education level, has consistently been correlated to migration.

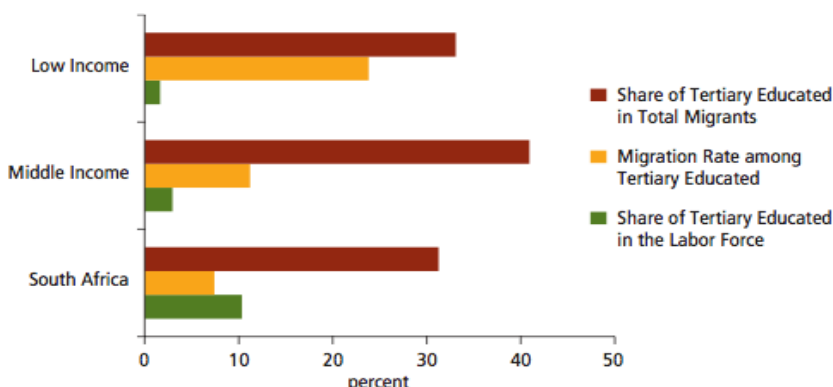
The migration of highly educated Africans, which has been labeled as “brain drain” has been well documented now (Kane and Leedy, 2013). Some recent articulations of the notion have led to other terms such as “brain circulation.” In terms of the destination of the African migrants, statistics show that using the nation-state as unit of analysis, 50 percent of the African migrants have other African countries as their destination, while 46 percent migrate to high-income countries and 4 percent to the Middle East (Ratha, Dilip et al. 2011, 19). It has also been established that the higher the level of education of a migrant, the longer the distance between his/her country of origin and the country of destination and the higher also the probability that the faraway destination would be an industrial country.

Certainly, in discussing the actual and potential roles of the Africans in the global Africans it is important to emphasize the fact that the context of the decolonization struggle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is substantively different from that of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, despite the continued negative weight of neo-colonial reality and liberal globalization. The expectation and nature of the engagement in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century PanAfrican cannot be realistically similar to those from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afropolitan. The key question is how the people of African descent located in the global context can articulate and actualize their engagement for social progress on the continent?

It is well documented that in the post-colonial era, with a focus on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the African presence that is triggered by higher education is considerable. Thus, the focus here is the African Diaspora working/living in the industrial countries that constitute current or potential agents for the flow of financial resources and the circulation of human capabilities.



**Figure 3.7 Migration of Tertiary-Educated Workers in Africa, by Country Income Level, 2000**



Source: Authors, based on data from the Global Skilled Migration database (described in Docquier and others 2010).

Note: From Ratha et al. (2011, 119)

At the time when African countries started to acquire their independence (late 1950s/early 1960s), human capital theory, which had regained popularity in industrial countries, appeared as an appealing framework for policy design toward socio-economic development. Human capital theory is an economic theoretical framework that aims to provide an understanding of the relationship between formal education and the economy. Theodore Schultz (1972, 5) defines it as follows:

Human capital is strictly an economic concept. Although it pertains to particular attributes of man, it is not intended to serve those who are engaged in analyzing psychological, social or cultural behavior. It is a form of capital because it is the source of future earnings, or of future satisfactions, or both of them.

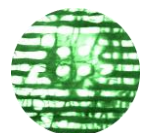
According to this theory, at the individual level, the higher the number of years of schooling, the more productive a person becomes. At the macro level, such as the level of a country, the higher the aggregate level of education of the population of that country, the higher the growth rate achieved by the country. A corollary of this argument is that individual productivity leads to higher income and greater national economic output and growth. In industrial countries of the West, primarily in the United States, many studies were undertaken from the 1950s to the 1970s, to support the theory of the positive and linear relation between formal education and economic performance, both of individuals and of societies/states.

Then and later, various dimensions of the assumptions of this theory including the notion that education is almost a sufficient condition for development were criticized (Thurow 1977, Assie-Lumumba 2001). However the “brain drain/circulation” and the ensuing accumulation of financial and human resource capabilities have tended to provide some





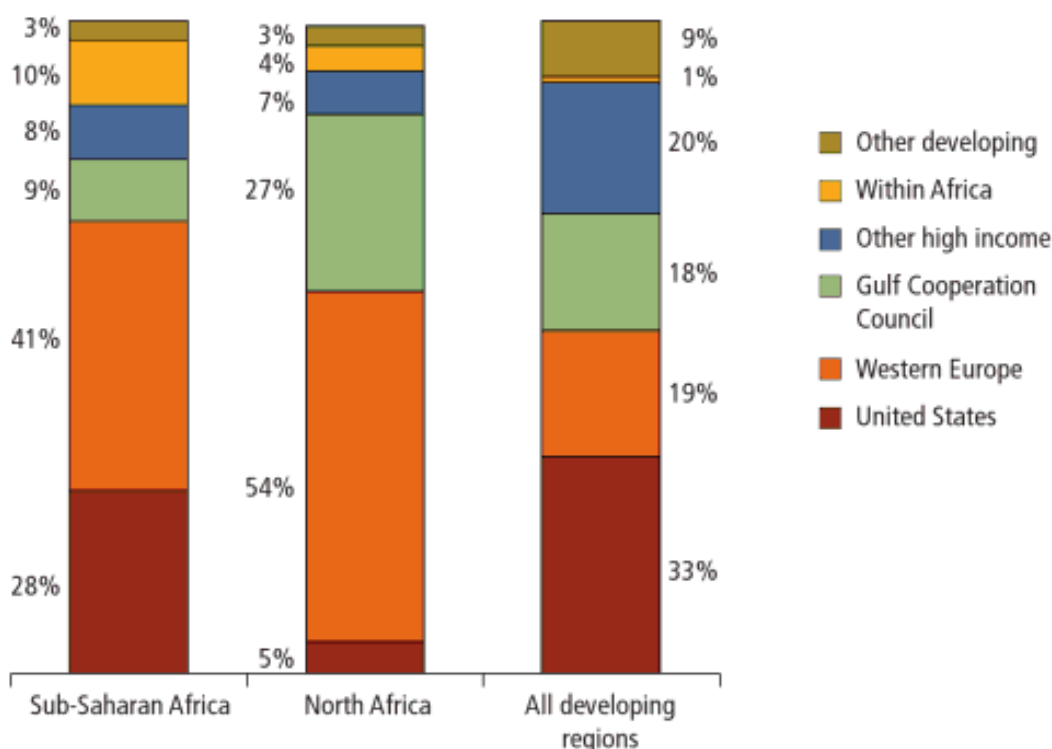
legitimacy to the enduring significance of education as an investment (Hallak, 1990). Thus the next section deals with remittances and human capacity in African development.



### 3. Contemporary Challenges and Forward-looking Opportunities in Financial and Human Resource Mobilization of the Global Africans

As indicated earlier, 46 percent of the African migrants relocated to the industrial countries compared to 50 percent who migrated within Africa. However, shown in the graph below, the bulk of the remittances of the Africans, not in absolute number of the transactions but rather in terms of monetary value, are sent from industrial countries. For Africa South of the Sahara, the remittances from West Europe and the United States represent 69 percent and more than three-fourths (77 percent) when the other high-income countries are added. An important focus of this paper is to address some of the issues related to the remittances and other transfers back to the African continent in an effort to seek maximization of the benefits for the African continent and people back home. One of the first questions is to find out the beneficiaries of the remittances.

**Figure 2.2 Source of Remittances to Africa and to All Developing Regions, 2010**



Source: Authors' calculations updating the methodology of Ratha and Shaw 2007 using bilateral migration data from World Bank 2011 and economic data from the World Development Indicators (December 2010).

Note: From Ratha (2011 p. 53)





Among the factors that sustain the relationship between the Afropolitans and the continent, the family as a social institution constitutes the primary magnetic force of attraction back to the homeland/continent.

In one episode of his acclaimed television series with companion book entitled “the Africans,” Ali Mazrui (1986) stated:

The African family is the most authentic social institution in the post-colonial era. In a continent steeped in artificiality, the African family is more real than many of our countries which were colonially made; more real than tribalism, manipulated by opportunistic politicians; more real than our economies most of which are mere shadows. ... You see, the family in Africa is vibrant in its emotions, compelling in its loyalties. It is alive and well, living right across the continent

He further remarked that the connections of the African family have turned every village into a place of pilgrimage for the sons and daughters scattered in many places within countries. This same sentiment of powerful connection has made every African country a village for the sons and daughters across the globe.

Numerous factors have led to increased numbers of Africans abroad. Whether they left their respective African countries to study and decided to stay abroad, or were recruited while they had not initially thought of leaving, or fled literally for their physical security and stayed, the Africans in industrial countries, especially in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and emerging destinations, have kept strong connections with their nuclear and extended families back in the continent.

In search for paradigms for social progress, the family provides a framework for development rooted in Africa's most positive and emulating cultural heritage. The family links from near and far away locations have nurtured human resources that have not been tapped in for Africa's comprehensive advancement.

The term African Diaspora has historically referred almost exclusively to the Africans who were forced out of Africa in the context of the transAtlantic enslavement. In fact African Diaspora includes populations that went out of Africa before the Transatlantic Enslavement. For instance, Africans from the Senegambian area all the way to part of current Mali had undertaken voyages across the Atlantic at least a hundred years before Columbus. Besides the historical composition, the African Diaspora now includes also those who left the continent recently and who have the most connection alive.



In this paper the Diaspora refers to the Africans who live outside the continent and who have current or potential functional ties with the African continent in terms of transfer of monetary funds, business enterprises, professional visits and personal journeys. Of the Diaspora of historical and contemporary origins, they have the most immediate responsibility<sup>1</sup> to contribute to the efforts of promoting social progress in Africa, although not all of them may partake in this cause.

Indeed, they make systematic efforts to maintain family ties, meet their social obligations back home, and return home periodically to replenish their own energies, start and check the progress of various projects. Although their financial transfers constitute real assets for the national economies, generally these contributions rarely constitute inputs in the planning and accounting of national factors of development. Even if these practices are common and consistent, they are nevertheless dispersed, individualized, or existing only within certain communities, not at the level of nation-states as recipients.

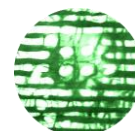
There are two major categories of considerable resources that the Diaspora can generate even greater values that can be transformed into factors for significant contribution to building Africa in general, and targeted sectors such as higher education: the financial and human resources are the two complementary components. My policy proposal is to create a global higher education trust resource for Africa's advancement<sup>2</sup> that would encompass a better or even optimal management of the financial and human resource asset in the Diaspora, which would in turn offer favorable circulation of these resources from lessening the tax burden financial transfers and ongoing beyond individual family to gather resources for institutions, countries and regional economic communities. This proposal is to explore the utilization, to a full extent, of the hitherto untapped African resources outside Africa toward the renewal and expansion of Africa's higher education. This consists of organizing and maximizing the actual and potential assets at the global level, specifically between African governments and those of industrial countries where Africans reside and are the agent of financial transfer and human capability circulation in terms of financial flows and asset building and utilization for investment in education.

In the recent decades, there has been an increased, albeit still modest, interest in studying, quantifying and analyzing the cross-border financial flows that result from migrants' connections to different parts of the world. Data show that remittances have been higher than the total ODA to Africa. In a document rightly entitled "Remittances to Africa Overtakes Foreign Direct Investment" it is stated that: "Remittances from Africans working abroad in the period 2000-2003 averaged about US\$17 billion per annum virtually overtaking Foreign

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<sup>1</sup> There are outstanding issues such as Africa's legitimate claim for overdue reparations from Western powers that reduced Africans to commodities that they plundered human along with material resources for centuries and robbed them off their humanity. However, my proposal here is to focus on areas where immediate actions can be taken by the Africans in collaboration with external the international partners.

<sup>2</sup> This proposal was first made as part of an address entitled "African Renewal through Higher Education with a Public Mission" at the joint United Nations University/UNESCO International Conference on "Africa and Globalization: Learning from the Past, Enabling a Better Future," Tokyo, Japan, September 2009.



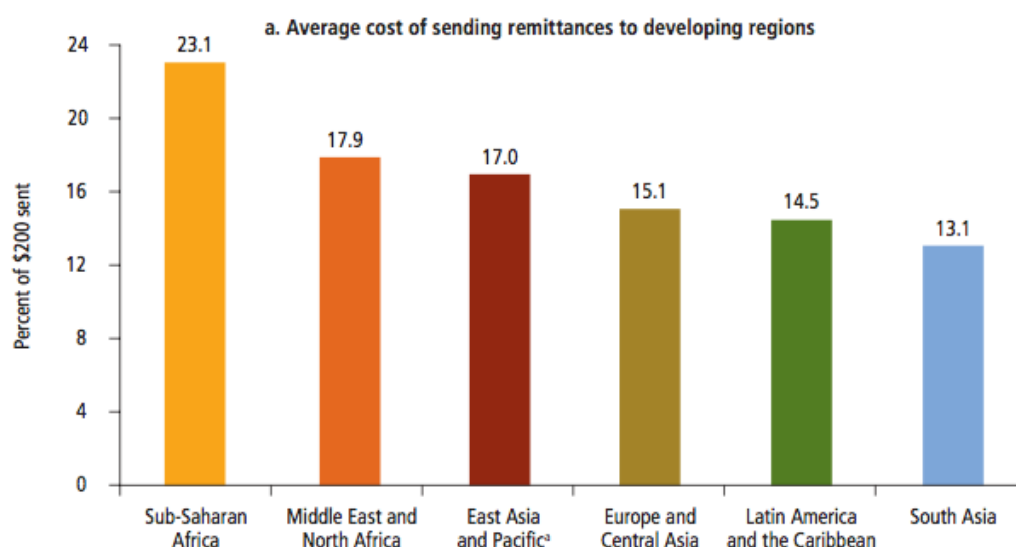
Direct Investment flows which averaged about \$15 billion per annum during the same period.”<sup>3</sup> It has increased further (Ratha et al., 2011). If in addition the amounts transferred through informal channels were counted, remittances would be several times the net ODA.

The main financial asset consists of the income transfer in the form of remittance. Whether they are regular or ad hoc, and regardless of their volume, these transfers generally incur at least three charges that diminish the actual amount of money that the sender transfers and that the recipient acquires:

1. Income tax: The money transferred to Africa is taxed in the countries where the senders reside, earn their money, and send the remittance from;
2. Transfer fee: To make the transfer, the sender must pay a fee to the bank or any other channel and the informal ones;
3. Withdrawal fee: At the final destination, to withdraw the money the recipient in Africa must pay a fee, which is usually withheld from the amount received.

These three amounts consecutively withheld are legitimate part of the modern economic organization and legal requirements for all members of any contemporary nation-state.

**Figure 2.11 Cost of Sending Remittances to and from Developing Regions**



Source, World Bank (2011, 75)

<sup>3</sup><http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/press/Promoting%20International%20support%20for%20peace%20and%20development%20%85.pdf>



However, they reveal several problems involved in the transfer and which limit the actual positive impact on Africa:

1. Income tax policies vary considerably in countries of residence for the Diasporic Africans. Whatever the amount of income retained in the form of tax, it constitutes a considerable proportion;
2. The reduction in the actual amount received;
3. The money received by the families and/or invested in business contributes to the economies but the redistributive capacity at the community and national levels is limited.

Taking into account the countries of residence of the global African Diaspora, there are variations in the mechanisms and means through which remittances are transferred, even if the recent spread of the global financial services such as Western Unions, MoneyGram and others have tended to create some commonalities. There are global mobile banking systems and some local innovative initiatives such as Safaricom in Kenya, Cellpay in several countries, Glomoney in Nigeria that can cut the cost of transfer and withdrawal fees. However, these systems are not yet widely available on a large scale. Even if they were widely used, the issue of the cost of the taxation of the money transferred remains an important one. Furthermore, the individualized actions that are imbedded in the current modalities of remittance flows do not offer possibilities to address issues at national levels. This proposal focuses on gathering public funds to contribute to renew the caring state with a specific goal of helping fund higher education with a public mission.

The cost of educating the majority of the Africans in the Diapsora, including those who send money to their families or for their own business, was borne by public fund. Yet, practically, they have no public obligation in their countries of origin (through taxation for instance) since their income is earned outside an African country. Therefore, while the private return to education is guaranteed, even if they contribute to the economy, social return to the African countries is not systematically organized. How can we make the contributions go beyond families and provide systematically direct development support for public services that represent public good such as education?

The proposal is to initiate global negotiation to grant Africans tax exemption on the portion of their income that will be sent to contribute to the global fund geared toward designated projects. The same way private foundations in industrial counties benefit from tax exemption when they send money for development assistance, global agreements could be reached to allow Africans to send money that would be tax and fee exempt all the way. A secure trust fund will receive the money. The fund collected will serve solely for the renovation and expansion of old higher education facilities and the creation of new ones that would carefully be mapped to serve equitably communities in each country. It will be secured



and strictly monitored to ensure management with integrity. This is essential to motivate the Diaspora to participate in the fund.

The loss of revenues of industrial countries due to the tax exemption for Africans in the Diaspora would not be considerable but on the African side the money gathered could have significant impact. The tax exemption would be supplemental to, but not a substitute of, ODA from the industrial countries. The ODA and this contribution are not mutually exclusive. Also, the African Diaspora will be free to continue to send private funds to families without tax exemption.

In addressing the question of tapping in human capabilities and resources, it is worth stating upfront that African labor and genius constitute a major part in building the first world economic power. In the contemporary world, Africans who migrate further away from the continent are highly educated and acquire additional competences. Those who have less formal education but manage to travel far and make it, have special skills that are sharpened through their experiences. Thus, all the Africans gain knowledge and skills that can constitute direct input for Africa's project for social progress.

The direct loss for Africa through migration is also, and often more acute in human resources. Taking into account the considerable fluidity of the Africans and their continued strong ties to families, what steps can be taken to channel their knowledge as a regular source of in-kind contribution for sustainable development in Africa?

Brain drain suggests one final direct path, away from Africa. It is in part this sense of finality that has linked migration to the idea of drainage. Aspects of the drainage are real: when medical doctors leave; when the departure of one professor leads to sudden increase in the teacher/student ratios, overwhelming responsibility on the remaining professors translating into fewer examinations to avoid intensive grading time, hence declining quality. However, migration does not mean cutting the ties.

Human resource circulation is real and factual. This is not to encourage migration as a solution to Africa's predicaments. On the contrary, the financial and human resources toward the new, improved and expanded higher education is to improve the learning conditions.

The current Diasporic population that constitutes the focus of my reflection has grown very complex in recent decades. For instance, in the 1960s most African women who went abroad were spouses of diplomats and did not have professional careers. Now, many women abroad are highly educated and work in their own rights.

More generally, older generations of migrants include those who arrived from Africa with partial or complete formal education to the highest levels, and even as professionals. Some have retired or are approaching retirement. There is another category composed of those who are mature but are likely to work for longer times ahead. They constitute a real powerhouse in all the educational and professional fields. By and large, they





have worked hard and achieved excellence and are recognized authorities in their respective fields.

The younger generations include those who were born of recent African migrant parents and were even born in Africa and migrated with one or both parents when they were children. Some have citizenship of the countries where they were born and/or live outside Africa. They are also represented in the entire disciplinary spectrum in their academic and technical studies, including the new areas of sciences and technologies. They are bright, capable, daring, full of energy and passion, resolved to play their roles in ensuring that Africa's performance and image improve.

As adviser to many individual students and student organizations<sup>4</sup>, in the case of Cornell University where I have been teaching for almost 20 years, I see them every day poised to return to Africa as interns, volunteers in various capacities including to help set up computer systems, or work for pay. Sometimes, they surprise their own parents by their determination to return to Africa to play their part, ironically while so many young people of their age in Africa dream of leaving to study abroad because of the deteriorating conditions that are depriving them of quality education.

How to utilize these students and young professionals who are ready to serve? How to utilize the youth from the Diaspora and those in the continent who have their own solid assets including their familiarity with the social context and their experiences with coping mechanisms in difficult living and learning conditions?

Various programs, across the continent, are working to utilize the monetary and human resources associated with the Africans abroad. My proposal is to organize systematically and forge ways to use these human resources in all the countries to boost higher education, for instance, with professors providing regular courses in the African higher education institutions. The same way tax exemption can be worked out and agreements can be reached with institutions in industrial countries for release time to devote to African institutions. African students can be training through participating in research projects. These are ideas that can help conceptualize further, design and implement the Global Higher Education Trust Resource for Africa's Advancement (GHETRAA) for long-term financial and immense human resources boost to African higher education.

There are various social sectors that can be the focus for such a boost (i.e. healthcare, agriculture). My focus is higher education because of the reasons I gave above as a catalyst for regeneration of the lower levels of education, improved capacity of the higher education

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<sup>4</sup> Black Students United (BSU), Black Innovators, Nigerian Student Association, Scholars to Leaders that focuses on Kenya, Cornellians for the Congo, Black Innovators, Coalition of Pan-African Scholars. Many more such as Ghanaians at Cornell, and other student organizations that are more focused on specific areas such as fighting Malaria are also engaged.



systems to form capable human resource, and enhancement of service to the community through pertinent research and other ground for community outreach.

There is a need for a global commitment starting with the Africans in the continent and the Diaspora. Higher education must be given increased and necessary roles. Through proposals such as this one, for instance the Millennium Development Goals could reconnect with the fundamental missing link: Higher Education as a central tool for permanent corrective mechanisms for social progress. A full proposal can be made with all the data, diagrams, and the technical and substantive articulation. The goal in this paper is the share the basic ideas.

In the context of globalization, migration is likely to continue. The speed of Africa's renewal can be accelerated through the convergences of contributions including that of Africans in the Diaspora. This renewal requires vibrant institutions of higher learning, opening of possibilities for the innovative impulse of the mature and young minds that can curve the drive to migrate in large numbers. With the proposed project as a permanent mechanism for support to Africa's educational institutions, those who leave anyway will continue to contribute to sustaining social progress in the continent. This is not to suggest that migration is the solution to Africa's development needs. Rather the idea to tap in any potential resources and turn into asset some of the problems.



## Conclusion

There have always been many issues that have not created systematically consensus among Africans and between Africans and their partners some of whom have complicated relations with Africa marked by the colonial experience and the unequal global system. However, in the 1960s, there was shared euphoria, high hopes, expectations, and confidence in a brighter future for Africa that characterized the independence movements and the United Nations Development Decade. It has been a long time since such global convergence of enthusiasm accompanied by internal and external commitment to contribute to the means for Africa's advancement was expressed.

Not long ago, we have been exposed to the Afro-pessimists' message that aimed at putting doubt in the minds of the still perpetual and most unabashed optimists. There was the terrible period where the African-engineered Lagos Plan of Action was rejected and replaced with arrogance by the Structural Adjustment Programs. Even the calls for global engagements, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which will conclude in 2015, were articulated in the heavy atmosphere of "donor fatigue" despite the fact that a few countries have stepped up their contribution to Africa's advancement.

When the world economy and finance were threatened with collapse, the world capitalist system resorted to state to bail out the private sector. Thus, they proved right the African scholars, activists, and students who challenged the structural adjustment programs and the assumed essentially good nature of their liberal economic foundation which led to their policies geared toward weakening the African state, especially the caring state supporting social services such as education. In the education sector, these policies led to scandalous neglect of higher education.

As a world community, we ought to have become more humble and wiser as we realize our acute interdependence. The impact of climate change on the world, irrespective of borders or those who have accelerated it, global health pandemics spreading at an astonishing speed, and the vulnerable links of the world economy, should lead us to increased sensibility and sensitivity to commitment to build a better world by addressing the needs of all the communities. This is why we are here. With good will and solid commitment of the global partners, the mobilization of Africa's daughters and sons abroad and at home will step up the pace of a new positive convergence towards the realization of the beautiful project of social progress in Africa. The countries where the Africans abroad are located and which consent to tax break deal and human resources exchange will be making contributions. As these countries and the Africans, at least who received their general education and/or other resources to pursue their higher education goals, they will at the same time fulfill a duty with no undertone a one-way gift to Africa devoid of dignity. As for the continent, its institutions and their various beneficiaries, there will be a legitimate and deserved contribution from joint



efforts conceptualized around the resources generated by the Africans located in the global world. This will be essentially good for Africa and the global community.

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