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Cultures of Innovation of the African Poor

Common Roots, Shared Traits, Joint Prospects? On the Articulation of Multiple Modernities in African Societies and Black Diasporas in Latin America

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Abstract

The globalized Western culture of innovation, as propagated by major aid institutions, does not necessarily lead to empowerment or improvement of the well-being of the stake-holders. On the contrary, it often blocks viable indigenous innovation cultures. In African societies and African Diasporas in Latin America, cultures of innovation largely accrue from the informal, not the formal sector. Crucial for their proper understanding is a three-fold structural differentiation: between the formal and informal sector, within the informal sector, according to class, gender or religion, and between different transnational social spaces. Different innovation cultures may be complementary, mutually reinforcing, or conflicting, leading in extreme cases even to a 'clash of cultures' at the local level. The re-percussions of competing, even antagonistic agencies of innovative strategic groups are demonstrated, analyzing the case of the African poor in Benin and the African Diasporas of Brazil and Haiti.

Key Words: Economic development; cultural change; innovations; social structure; Afri-can Diaspora; Benin; Brazil; Haiti

JEL Classification: O31; Z1; E26; Z12; Z13; O57

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Zusammenfassung

Innovationskulturen der Armen in Afrika

Die globalisierte westliche Innovationskultur, wie sie von den großen Entwicklungshilfe-institutionen propagiert wird, führt nicht notwendigerweise zur Verbesserung der Lebensbedingungen der Armen. Sie blockiert im Gegenteil oft wertvolle Ansätze endogener kultureller Innovationen. In afrikanischen Gesellschaften und in der Afrikanischen Diaspora Lateinamerikas entstehen Innovationskulturen überwiegend im informellen, nicht im formellen Sektor. Diese Innovationskulturen weisen eine dreifache strukturelle Differenzierung auf: zwischen formellem und informellem Sektor, innerhalb des informellen gemäß sozialer Schichtung, Geschlecht oder Religion sowie zwischen transnationalen sozialen Räumen. Diese unterschiedlichen Innovationskulturen können sich gegenseitig ergänzen und verstärken oder aber auch bekämpfen, was in Extremfällen bis hin zum „Kampf der Kulturen" auf lokaler Ebene führt. Die Auswirkungen dieser konkurrierenden oder antagonistischen Handlungsstrategien innovativer strategischer Gruppen werden an Hand von Fallstudien der Armen in Benin und in der Afrikanischen Diaspora Brasiliens und Haitis aufgezeigt.

Article Outline

1. On the Concept of Cultures of Innovation

The advancement of our knowledge about cultural change and development is considerable, but the 'white spots' in our cognitive map grow even faster[1]. Outdated hypotheses about "monocultural" readings of a nation's past or about cultural determinism, which were considered inspiring truth (e.g. about the impact of the protestant ethic on the growth of European capitalism), turned out to be heroic oversimplifications of little prognostic value (cf. Sen 2002:6, 10-13). Nevertheless, they remain cherished by many individuals and social groups (including development experts), not least, because they bolster the self-assurance and provide ready made concepts in distinguishing between social peers and strangers.

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[1] This paper was presented at the 16th ISA World Congress of Sociology, Durban/South Africa, July 23-29, 2006, Research Committee 09 – Social Transformations and Sociology of Development, Session 02: Global Modernity, Civilizations and Local Life-Worlds (Part II). An earlier version was delivered to the INST – International Conference on: *Innovations and Reproductions in Cultures and Societies* (IRICS), Vienna, December 9-11, 2005. Thanks for valuable suggestions go to the participants of the conferences mentioned above, and to my colleagues at the GIGA, notably Gilberto Calcagnotto, Wolfgang Hein, Steffen Trede and Janina Dill. The responsibility for any fallacies or inaccuracies in the paper remains of course with the author.

Stimulated by Max Weber's enlightening thesis on the protestant ethic as the spirit of European capitalist development, generations of social scientists searched for cultural innovations which could promote economic growth in developing countries (LDCs)[2]. Although a tendency still prevails to underrate the role of culture and spirituality in development, notably among economists and development experts, there is a consensus in social science that culture matters[3]. The question is rather: What constitutes the decisive element of culture in relation to development, and how does culture matter (cf. Sen 2004)?

Culture is not inherently good or bad, a simple truth which, however, has to be underlined time and again in view of fashionable but questionable theses on the 'clash of cultures' and 'axes of evil'. Yet, under certain conditions its propensity to change and influence perceptions of power and values can lead to considerable improvements in general well being (cf. Rao/Walton 2004:1). However, recurring patterns and processes of cultural change and development should not cloud essential differences of innovation processes in different countries and cultures. Besides, neither the influence of civil society nor of transnational social spaces on culture and development are necessarily constructive (cf. Ikelegbe 2001; Ukiwo 2003).

The fundamental ambivalence of the impact of culture renders its analysis tricky and particularly stimulating at the same time. Yet, it would be premature to look for solutions in ready-made concepts, and to jump from the recognition of the multiple interacting processes of cultural change and development to one-dimensional theories on the linkage between culture and economic growth or, even more so, to cultural determinism[4]. As convincing as these theories may have appeared on an heuristic level at the time of their conception, in retrospect, taking into account the evolution of the history of science, they have hardly ever proven to be sound scientific reasoning, as argued by Amartya Sen (2002:9-17) in a lucid excurse on the history of failed approaches from Max Weber to Huntington.

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[2]   Cf. Weber (1904/2002). For an overview on the vast body of literature on development and cultural change cf. Rao/Walton 2004; Sen 2002; Douglas 2002; Faschingeder 2001; 2003; Inglehart/Baker 2000; Bliss et al. 1997; Elwert 1996; Müller 1996; Schönhuth 1991; for current views of African scholars on this question cf. Odhiambo 2002; Masolo 1994; 2003; Soyinka 1994.

[3]   There exist several – sometimes contradicting – definitions of *culture* and development in social science (cf. Elwert 1996:51-58). Albeit not too broad, our definition of *culture* should be sufficiently abstract to include all aspects, relevant in relation to our subject, therefore I hold with the general approaches of Rao/Walton (2004), who regard culture as "those aspects of life that facilitate the comprehension of relationships between individuals, between groups, between ideas and between perspectives." and Mary Douglas (2002:3): "Culture is a dynamically interactive and developing socio-psychic system. At any point in time the culture of a community is engaged in a joint production of meaning." In short, culture has to be recognized as "non-homogeneous, non-static, and interactive", otherwise cultural prejudice and determinism easily lend themselves to cultural bigotry, alienation, political tyranny and doubtful theories (cf. Sen 2002:8-13).

[4]   Ronald Inglehart can be considered a leading proponent of the latter.– For a critique cf. Rao/Walton 2002:18-24; Sen 2002:20.

Unfortunately, both the quest for an export of growth inducing cultural essentials, and the transfer of globalized concepts of structural adjustment, as pushed by international donors during the 1980s, failed. In the light of global triumph of capitalism the latter became a religion in itself for many of its adherents and promoters, including economists and development experts[5]. Pre-conceived ideas which might have worked within the European cultural setting did not act up in the face of the socio-cultural heritage of African societies, neither did the opposite, the idealization of "traditional African cultures" by European ethno-philosophers[6]. For our purpose, however, it is important to take into account the diversity of mutually competitive systems within any given culture. This includes a wide range of marginal practices and value-systems, which is often hidden behind the visible characteristics of a dominant culture. The exploration of them would require new approaches, methods and an important shift in the current scientific paradigms (cf. Hountondji 2001:13).

A holistic understanding of the linkage between culture and development as delimitated above is the underlying rational of the concept of 'cultures of innovation' developed and applied by the UNESCO (2004) and scholars as D'Orville (2004) and others (cf. Wieland 2004; Abele et al. 2001; Barber 2004; Beaver 2004; Heidenreich 2001; Herbig 1994). According to Heidenreich's definition 'cultures of innovation' are relatively stable modes of reflection, behavior and social organization, directed towards 'modernization' or 'development'. They are often based on shared values and fulfill important roles of orientation, motivation, coordination, and legitimization, concerning the actual performance of innovation processes. Therefore, their investigation enhances the quality of prognosis of social actions (cf. Heidenreich 2001: chap. 1).

Today as in the past, cultures of innovation have existed not only in industrialized countries, but in nearly every region of the world. However, there is no passepartout of cultural change, but cultures of innovation depend on space, time and context specific frameworks. In short, they are a significant part of multiple modernities[7] and development oriented processes of socialization, influenced by globalization and transnational social spaces (cf. Callaghy et al. 2001; Pries 2001; Robertson 1995; Sassen 1999; Ferguson 2005). Instead of propa-

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[5]   Cf. Benjamin's thesis on "capitalism as religion" (Benjamin 1921) and Dirk Baecker (2003).

[6]   For a critique of the ignorance of African cultural pluralism, as well as of the ethnocentrism and the ideological facets of ethno-philosophy, cf. Hountondji (2001a; 1997).

[7]   On the ongoing debate of concepts of 'multiple modernities' as theoretical and methodological concept to counteract biased evolutionary theories of social change, promoting the Westernization of the world with globalizing modernization projects of supposedly universal validity, cf. Arnason 2005; Eisenstadt 2000; Spohn 2003; Tambiah 2000. The concept of multiple modernities shows that there is no single road to the modernization of societies:

gating worldwide the neo-liberal credo of the 'rational actor'[8], research should focus more on the unexplored potential of indigenous cultures of innovation (cf. Elwert 1996:58-59; Le Roy 2003; Hountondji 1997, 2001).

Even seemingly static cultural factors such as custom, tradition, religion, or ethnicity, which are often said to be barriers to economic growth in Africa, have been invented or adapted to changing requirements of societies (cf. Hobsbawm/Ranger 1983). In many cases they are not backward oriented, but to the contrary, represent multiple modernities of developing areas (cf. Arnason 2005; Eisenstadt 2000; Knöbel 2001; Spohn 2003; Tambiah 2000). Therefore, it would be misleading to put the blame for lacking development in Africa or elsewhere on the cultural heritage in general, the so-called "traditional African culture" or "traditional African institutions", which are frequently considered in a simplistic and deterministic manner as customary barrier to democratization or economic growth[9]. The underlying dualistic concept of culture (modern vs. traditional) ignores the reality of a universe of different co-existing, and often competing cultures within a society (cf. Sen 2002:2, 9-11; Douglas 2002; Odhiambo 2002:2-3)[10]. A closer look at these so called socio-cultural barriers to growth reveals that African cultures are highly differentiated with substantial instances of 'high modernity' (cf. Scott 1998; cf. Sen 2002:10-11 and the debate on 'multiple modernities' in Africa, cf. Geschiere et al. 2007; Ferguson 2006, 2005; Deutsch et al. 2003; Comaroff/Comaroff 2000).

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[8]   The 'cognitive-rationalistic reduction of rationality' may lead to fundamental fallacies, notably, if it does not take into account the emotional driving forces of actors (cf. Trotha 1994:6-8). Actors are neither determined by social class nor by ratio alone, but strongly influenced by strong emotions, like love or hatred, the longing for fame and honor etc. However, these emotions are grown on, and embedded in specific cultures (cf. Kohnert 2006).

[9]   For some outstanding examples of doubtful oversimplifications of the role of African culture as an impediment to modern economic development cf. Harrison/Huntington (2000:xiii) on Ghana, and the sharp critique of these culturalistic and essentialist positions by Sen (2002:10-11) and Bierschenk/Olivier de Sardan (1998:18-19). The cultural heritage of African societies has often unjustly been reduced to dominant characteristics like the rent seeking or prebend economy (cf. Chabal/Daloz 1999; Menzel 2003), "African neopatrimonialism" (cf. Chabal 1998:302; Chabal/Deloz 1999:128-30) or on "informal constraints" (North 1990:36-37), without due regard to its historical roots and dependency on the global economic system, as explained by Bayart (1989) and Bilgin/Morton (2002:73-75). For further, more recent examples of doubtful oversimplification, notably in economics, see fashionable theses on 'ethnic fragmentation' as allegedly crucial determinant of African rent-seeking societies (cf. Easterly/Levine 1997), on the lack of provision of public goods (cf. Kimenyi 2006), or about the size of the informal sector in general (cf. Lassen 2003:1).

[10] For a critique of the lack of regard for the pluralism of African cultures, as well as of ethnocentrism and of the ideological facets of ethno-philosophy, cf. Hountondji (2001, 1997). The growing awareness of the importance of cultural change for African development is reflected in development policy as well: On June 20, 2003, the ministers of culture of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, on their first meeting in Dakar (Senegal), adopted the Dakar Plan of Action to start an innovative approach with culture as a driving force for development (cf. The Courier ACP-EU, no. 199, July 2003:8-9 and www.acpse.org).

Not everything which is modern, is development oriented at the same time, as was demonstrated time and again by the critique of monocausal theories of modernization (cf. Deutsch et al. 2003; Geschiere et al. 2007; Ferguson 2006). The political economy of occult belief systems showed for example the different facets of the modernity of African belief in magic and witchcraft (cf. Geschiere 1997; Comaroff/Comaroff 2000). Depending on its local environment and linkages to transnational social spaces these occult belief systems played an emancipatory or delaying role (cf. Kohnert 2003, 2004). In short, rather than blaming the failure of development in Africa and elsewhere on cultural barriers, we should investigate their propensity to bring to the fore sustainable indigenous cultures of innovation[11].

2. Specific Cultures of Innovation within the Informal Sector

Multiple Cultures of Innovation vs. Globalized Western Concept of Modernization

For African and Afro-American cultures of innovation the breeding ground is the informal, not the formal sector. In the following, I prefer to regard the informal sector with Elwert et al. (1983:283), Portes et al. (1989:12), and Feige (1990) as those sectors of the economy which are not, or only insufficiently recorded, controlled, taxed or otherwise regulated by state activities[12]. Hitherto, academic interest and research focused on innovations in the formal sector, e.g. on the state, national political or economic elites, i.e. driving forces of change and

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[11] As *indigenous* I consider those cultural innovations, which are rooted in the proper developing capacity of the people employing these innovations, e.g. in the sense Paul Richards (1985; 2006), Diawara (2003), Masolo (2003), and Brigg/Sharp (2004) used the term. Nevertheless, the reception of foreign influence, its acceptance, and its integration into the local imaginary, constitute *indigenous innovations* as well, notably if these external factors are adapted to local conditions, which is usually the precondition for wholehearted acceptance. This is especially important to note in view of the increasing impact of Glocalization (cf. Schuerkens 2003; Robertson 1995; Kraidy 1999; Swyngedouw 2004), and importance of transnational social spaces in the transmittance and adaptation of innovations, which will be explained later on in more detail. However, not any local innovation applied by the poor peasant is necessarily indigenous and effective; the history of development aid is rich in examples of ill-adapted innovations, forced on the peasants by misguided development projects (cf. Bierschenk et al. 1993; Kohnert/Weber 1991).

[12] Corresponding to the controversial discussion on the role of the *informal* sector there exist many, sometimes contradicting concepts and definitions (cf. Altvater/Mahnkopf 2002; Chen et al.. 2004; Despres 1988; Evers 1987; Elwert et al. 1983; Thomas 1992:3-7; Roitman 1990; Chabal/Daloz 1999; Charmes 2000:62). Informality is not an inherent quality of specific economic actions, but a social construct (cf. Portes et al. 1989; Ratner 2000:3; Elwert et al. 1983:292), which is visible e.g. concerning the *Vermachtung* (i.e. restriction of market mechanism by social, political and economic power) of markets, or with respect to the linkage between the informal and the formal, the former subsidizing the latter. On the concept of *informal politics*, developed along similar lines as in economics, and on its relevance for African societies, cf. Chabal/Daloz 1999. For a critical review of the latter cf. Laakso 1999 and Cowen/Laakso 2002.

their innovative agency or management qualities, mostly linked with supposedly universal values of democratization and economic growth, with their globally propagated concepts, like good governance, accountability, structural adjustment and free markets (cf. Booth et al. 2006; Grindle 1996; UNESCO 2004; Harrison 2004; Whitfield 2005). Unfortunately, the neglect of informal cultures of innovation prompted the disregard of crucial potentials of innovation, particularly in the poorest African countries and in the African Diaspora of the Americas.

Another 'blind spot' in research was created by the unfortunate reduction of the manifold dimensions of the informal sector to the concept of 'social capital' or 'social networks' within the framework of new Institutional Economics. Whereas Marxism tried to press home its point that capital constitutes a social relationship, institutional economics falls into the other extreme by trying to reduce the role of 'social capital' to its economic value for (formal) institution building[13]. Redirecting research towards the informal sector is indispensable because of two major reasons. First, because of the utmost importance of the informal sector for LDCs in general and for the African poor in particular[14] (cf. Kohnert 2000; Elwert et al. 1983; Evers 1987; Ratner 2000:3; Altvater/Mahnkopf 2002; Enquete-Kommission 2002:242). To guarantee their survival, the poor, who can no longer rely merely on their local cultural heritage (e.g. traditional norms of reciprocity and solidarity, rapidly disintegrating under the pressure of globalization) have to look for innovative solutions within their social setting, meaning the informal sector. The quest for these solutions is strongly influenced by cultures of innovation. However, and this is the second reason which will be explained in detail below, significant structural differences exist not only between cultures of innovations of the formal and the informal sector, but also within the informal sector. Both differences have serious repercussions with regard to the developmental trajectory.

What is more, the fault lines between the formal and the informal become increasingly blurred in various ways by globalization. This has been demonstrated with respect to different standards for culturally induced innovations between the so-called 'useful' and 'useless'

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[13] The ongoing discussion of "social capital" and development (cf. Grootaert/Bastelaer 2002; OECD 2001:41), includes relevant information on innovative cultural change. However, the concept of "social capital" is problematic out of various reasons (cf. Sen 2002:5-6). For a radical critique of the conceptual weakness of the 'social capital' and 'social networks' approach, especially of its (un-) historic and essentialist elements cf. Meagher 2005:3, 20; Emirbayer/Goodwin 1994; Blokland/Savage 2001:225.

[14] In the 1990s, the informal sector contributed on average 41% to the GDP in sub-Saharan Africa (Benin: 41%; Ghana: 58%) and 29% in Latin America, according to tentative estimates of the ILO (ILO 2002:24; Kohnert 2000). About 72% of total employed outside the agricultural sector were employed in the informal sector in SSA (51% in Latin America), cf. Chen et al. 2004: doc 10.

development regions by Ferguson (2006:380) and Reno (1998)[15], who took 'governance' and investment criteria concerning strategic investments of oil-multinationals as examples in their analyses. The enclaves of the 'useful' Africa are not any longer delimitated either by national frontiers, or by the divide between the formal and informal, but by boundaries of transnational economic and social spaces. The chains of transnational enclaves of 'useful Africa', e.g. of oil multinationals in West Africa (often backed by powerful hidden national interest), function apparently according to rules and ethics beyond the global official discourse on governance or on codes of conduct of international development cooperation. The poor in these regions are regularly excluded from the 'useful Africa', as shown by the examples of the Niger Delta and Cabinda. They have to obey special laws of globalization, i.e. globalized exclusion and marginalization. One way to overcome these adverse effects of globalization for the poor is the quest of the stakeholders for indigenous cultures of innovation (cf. Herbig 1994; Simo 2005; Abele et al. 2001).

Moreover, globalization is accompanied by new forms of (re-)construction of social and cultural identities and by a new dynamic delimitation of ethnicity. The political economy of strategies of exclusion or of political instrumentalization of religion deals with instructive examples (cf. politics of ethnicity/xenophobia; Berking 2003; Lentz/Nugent 2000; Kohnert 2006). In addition, globalization is often geared toward the integration of new elements of a universal culture, which are more often than not adapted to the local conditions in order to maintain the identity of the group in question (cf. Berking 2003). This kind of 'glocalization' (cf. Robertson 1995; Altvater 2003; Kraidy 1999; Swyngedouw 2004; Schuerkens 2003)[16] is typical for the identity formation of innovative groups in the informal sector of Africa and the African Diaspora in the Americas.

Differences between Formal and Informal Cultures of Innovation

In spite of the strong articulation of modes of production of the formal and informal sector[17], there are decisive differences between the cultures of innovation of both sectors. These differences concern both the political evaluation of their impact and their social and economic structure. Generations of innovative Hausa, Fulbe, Igbo and Yoruba entrepreneurs in West Africa,

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[15] Machiavellist terms apparently coined with allusion to the French Gaullist interpretation of *l'Afrique utile vs. l'Afrique inutile.*

[16] Globalization is not just a question of growing homogenization, uniformity and interdependence, but at the same time diversification, the creation of new cross-cultural social spaces of meaning, of self-images and social identities and livelihoods; i.e. it is "[t]he universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal" (s. Robertson 1995).

[17] Cf. the thesis of the informal sector subsiding the formal Elwert et al. 1983; Evers 1987; Ratner 2000:3

for example, contributed effectively to the economic integration of the region through parallel cross-border trade between Nigeria and its neighbors. They thus established a sustainable culture of transnational trade networks (cf. Ufford 2004; Igué/Soule 1992; Meillassoux 1971). Although they pursued similar goals as the regional organization ECOWAS, they were accused by the latter of undermining national economies through their illegal activities. Consequently, they were harassed by the state (cf. Meagher 2003, 1997, 1995). With regard to structural differences it is to note that informal cultures of innovation are based mainly on local oral traditions and empirical indigenous knowledge[18], whereas their formal counterparts rely heavily on written sources, science and school knowledge on a global level. As a rule, the former are adapted to their respective natural, economic, social and political environment with a relatively strong propensity for flexible response to external shocks. Even though their relevance is mostly restricted to the micro or meso level, they bear significant potential for innovations in the poorer sections of the population even on a national level and beyond (cf. Barber 2004; Brown/Ulijn 2004; Flyn/Chatman 2001; Diawara 2003).

Indigenous cultures of innovation[19] are especially relevant for LDCs, but also for the marginalized African populations of emerging industrialized countries like Brazil (cf. chap. III), notably because of their exceptionally limited access to resources. It is open to debate, whether and to what extend there are still niches for the development of indigenous cultures of innovation of the poor under conditions of glocalization (cf. Briggs/Sharp 2004; Masolo 2003; Diawara 2003; Richards 2006; 1985). The outcome largely depends on the articulation with different dominating cultures of innovation and with transnational social spaces.

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[18] For the definition, concept and an annotated bibliography on 'indigenous knowledge' and its link to local cultures of innovation, cf. website: www.ik-pages.net/about-ik.html, April 25, 2006; which replaced the Nuffic's Indigenous Knowledge Unit that was responsible for maintaining this web site from 1992 until 2004.

[19] 'Indigenous' are considered those cultural innovations which are rooted in the proper development capacity of the stakeholders who apply these innovations (cf. Richards 1985, 2006; Diawara 2003; Masolo 2003; Briggs/Sharp 2004). However, the fault line between indigenous and exogenous innovations becomes blurred by the effects of glocalization, notably if one takes into account their historic roots. The incorporation of foreign cultural elements, and their integration into ones own life-world with due respect to local conditions, constitutes an indigenous innovation in our definition as well. However, once again we have to stress the ambiguous nature of such innovations, which are not necessarily effective. The history of development aid is full of examples of failed, allegedly well adapted innovations, as the example of the transfer of the development culture of the 'Green Revolution' or of the 'Training and Visit' approach to agricultural extension from Asia to Africa showed (cf. Bierschenk et al. 1993; Kohnert/Weber 1991).

Towards a Comprehensive Approach in the Analysis of Cultures of Innovation

Recognizing informal sector cultures of innovation as distinct from formal sector ones, as explained above does not suffice. It is open to question, whether an approach based on the assumption of unsystematically structured or even unstructured 'informal cultures'[20] is methodologically sound. Besides the inter-sectoral divergences of formal and informal cultures of innovations there are also strong indicators of intra-sectoral differences. This is not to deny the existence of common intersections of informal cultures of innovation. However, more recent studies demonstrate that it is crucial, to take into account not just the impact of the heterogeneity of the informal sector in general[21], but also of a structured variety of informal cultures of innovation. The latter may be differentiated according to space (geographic as well as social space) and cultural setting (e.g. class, gender, ethnicity, religion etc.; cf. Abele et al. 2001; Fuchs/Schönberger 2005; Levine 1965; Simo 2005; Thomas 2000).

In the following I propose a more comprehensive approach to the analysis of cultures of innovation which takes into account not just inter-sectoral, but also possible intra-sectoral cleavages and potentials. More precisely, I shall focus on the impact of differentiation according to class and gender, and its representation and articulation in different regional and transnational contexts.

The articulation of multiple cultures of innovation, its linkages, mutual reinforcement or obstruction, is especially interesting with regard to the comparison of cultures in Africa and of the African Diaspora, notably that in the Caribbean and Latin America. What matters in this respect is not just the common socio-cultural heritage, but also its actual embeddedness in common transnational social spaces, as indicated by the ongoing discussion of concepts of the African Diaspora[22]. This vision, namely, to rewrite global modern history 'from below', taking African migration over the centuries as an integral, yet, still unfinished process (in the Habermasian sense of an 'unfinished project'), could contribute to overcoming the prevailing eurocentric interpretation of 'modernity'e and of the linkage between culture and development (s. Patterson/Kelley 2000; Okpewho et al. 2001; Manning 2003; Zeleza 2005). In view

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[20] For examples cf. World Bank (2001:171), or David McClelland (cf. McClelland/Winter 1969), who departs from a worldwide linkage between achievement motivation and economic growth.

[21] E.g. its stratification according to different socio-economic strata, as recognized by the World Bank (2006:187) and ILO (2002).

[22] Cf. concepts of *Black Atlantic / unfinished migrations*; s. Goyal 2003; Cobley 1999; Ajaji 2000; Callaghy et al. 2001; Chivallon/Fields 2002; Mann/Bay 2001; Okpewho et al. 2001; Manning 2003; Zeleza 2005. – The term 'diaspora' indicates at the same time a condition, a process and a discourse. Zeleza (2005:41-42), whereby 'Africa' represents not only a geographic unit with its own history, but at the same time an imaginary space (p. 44): Crucial element of the African Diaspora is the shaping of its culture by the experience of repression and exploitation, and the resistance against it (cf. Byfield 2000:4-5; Butler 2000). This structural formation is a central denominator of both the marginalized and poor people of Africa and the African Diaspora.

of a much deplored weakness of current Diaspora Studies, its essentialist character and its lack of systematic cross-reference between actual lifeworlds of the homeland and diaspora, it is imperative to establish robust empirically proven links between both, in order to contribute to the advancement of African Diaspora studies (cf. Manning 2003:506)[23]. Hitherto, empirical studies on the current articulation of African communities in Africa and beyond, concentrated on economic aspects (e.g. remittances, capital flow). Cultural linkages were disregarded or referred to with anecdotic evidence only, although they could have at least as profound an impact as economic factors. Aimé Ceseaire's *Négritude,* or the US-American *Black Power* & *Black Consciousness* movement on African liberation movements and on the self-reflection of Africans in general (cf. Gilroy 1993; Mkandawire 2002), as mirrored in the current discourse on African Renaissance by politicians of the post-apartheid government in Pretoria or elsewhere bear testimony to it.

Multiple Fault Lines: On the Threefold Differentiation of Cultures of Innovation

The boundaries of cultures of innovation do not necessarily run along the formal and informal divide. Their articulation is characterized by a differentiation on three major structural levels:

- between the formal and the informal sector (*inter-sectoral differentiation*)
- between different social strata of the informal sector (*intra-sectoral differentiation*)
- between local and global or transnational social spaces (*transnational differentiation*).

Depending on the specific impact of these multiple fault lines, cultures of innovations can supplement and reinforce (synergy effect), or obstruct and even oppose each other, leading in extreme cases to violent confrontations, resembling local 'cultural revolutions' or a 'clash of cultures' (including drastic changes in gender roles). As a rule, at least one of the opposing groups, mostly the challenger, represents himself as 'revolutionary' in the sense of an innovative-emancipative force. A corresponding socio-political legitimation, its forging and consolidation as culture of innovation, can significantly contribute to enhancing the chances of goal-implementation. The members of these groups constitute through their actions, oriented by specific innovative cultures, those multiple modernities which are characteristic for the development process of LDCs. Examples in this respect are the 'cults of counter-violence'

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[23] These links are not restricted to the ancient roots in the transatlantic slave trade, when about six million Africans were forcibly taken to Brazil between 1550 and 1850. On the contrary, they are very much alive, as indicated by the ongoing (more or less enforced) migration of Africans to Europe and even to Latin American countries like Brazil.

(Wilson 1992), which originated in the course of the liberation movements in various African countries in the informal sector[24].

Within the informal sector, differentiation may run along class, ethnic, religious or gender lines. Actors of the different groups have special access to resources, divergent potentials, interests and chances for action. Correspondingly, productivity, personal income and political interest is as a rule class and gender specific. The same holds for the sub-cultures of the informal sector, created and maintained by activists of these groups. An example for the latter is the *njang-njang* movement of Guinea-Bissau in the 1980s, were women defended their newly secured rights, gained by their active part in the war of liberation, through a cultural renewal (cf. Kurz 1996; Jong 1987). Opposing the role-back strategy of old and new imposing *regulos*, they created and sustained a gender-oriented religious liberation movement. First limited to their own ethnic group the Balante, it later was extended nation wide, comprising witchcraft accusations against dominant rulers (s. Kohnert 1988, 1996:1350). Because these intra-sectoral fault-lines often have a decisive impact on the implementation of the aims of cultures of innovation, they deserve special attention. This will be demonstrated in depth by taking the example of inter-class differentiation at the grass-roots level between the poor, the middle and the upper or ruling class[25].

There is a threefold socio-economic differentiation of the informal sector (cf. Kohnert 2000) which extends to corresponding cultures of innovation[26].

a) *The poor*: Cultures of innovation of the poor have as primordial orientation the assurance of their survival as human beings. But in addition they are often directed towards emancipation from oppression and empowerment; therefore, these cultures frequently represent a socially emancipatory force (cf. Altvater 2003:14-18). The poor are marginalized because of their weak resource position, including limited individual development potential (lack of education, poor health etc.). Their survival as hu-

[24] Corresponding *'popular modes of political action'*, trying to reinterpret traditional communal ideals in an innovative manner, and to implement it country-wide, similar to the famous ideals of the French bourgeois revolution, are typical for the transition process of many African states (s. Geschiere 1988, 1997). – Similar sub-cultures of violence and counter-violence are known from the European history as well, as the example of robber barons and peasant wars in feudal Europe showed (cf. Elias 1969.2:405f.; Dinges 1998).

[25] Classification conceived as 'ideal-types' in the Weberian sense. As there exist exceptions and blurred borders, the following classification is designed for qualitative rather than quantitative comparison, as it may not allow in all cases for robust empirical falsification (cf. Prandy 2002). - Future empirical research on this matter should be complemented and cross-checked with a social distance approach to stratification (cf. Bottero/Prandy 2003). Answering recent calls from several sources for a renewal of class analysis that encompasses economic, social and cultural elements, this approach conceptualizes classes as social spaces, identified by mapping the network of social interactions that result in classes formed by relations of social closeness or distance.

[26] Concerning methodical delimitation cf. fn 27 above.

man beings depends entirely on the informal sector, as their access to the formal sector is as a rule severely restricted in several respects (schooling, labor- and capital market, housing, health-sector, judiciary etc.). The effects of globalized neo-liberal structural adjustment programs have rather spurred the marginalization of the poor in the past decade. Typical actors are migrant workers, families of small farmers and petty traders, child-laborers and -soldiers. Their culture of innovation is restricted to indigenous innovations. They are especially vulnerable to external shocks (e.g. disasters, epidemics, economic or political crisis) and liable to harmful external interventions (e.g. warlordism, drug- and child-trafficking). Women, children and the elderly are disproportionately represented in this stratum.

b) *The middle class*: In general, their resource position allows for their reproduction. They are deeply engrained in both sectors. However, this class can be divided in two subdivisions. The low middle class encompasses those whose resource position is endangered and who are threatened by social decline. They take part in the activities of the informal sector mainly to secure a supplementary income. Their innovation culture is determined by the aim to preserve their acquired economic and social status. Typical actors are wage earners and employees in the formal sector, middle peasants, and small traders. On the contrary, the upper middle class (senior officers, academics, small and middle entrepreneurs etc.) is oriented toward risk prevention and income diversification. Their involvement in the informal sector is meant to consolidate their position in the formal sector, e.g. an elevated career in the civil service. Their innovative culture is directed towards social advancement and social brokerage.

c) *Upper class*: The rich and powerful; their livelihood is secured in the formal sector, amongst others by their opulent resource position, and is sustained by social and political networks in which they are embedded. They use the informal sector strategically for profit maximizing and risk diversification, e.g. by large-scale parallel trans-border trade (smuggling in used cars, drugs, weapons or humans, re-export etc.), warlordism. This is predominantly a male domain and the corresponding innovative culture aims at power consolidation. Local rulers frequently use their innovative cultures for the pursuit of vested interests and the suppression of the poor and marginalized, which then leads to the cultural foundations of 'markets of violence', anchored at the cross-road of the formal and informal, local, regional and transnational social spaces (cf. Elwert 1996; Collier/Hoeffler 2001; Avant 2005).

Across these socio-economic fault lines is a gender differentiation of the informal sector and its innovative cultures, which typically aims at assuring the reproduction of the family (cf. Chen et al. 2004: doc 9-12) or the emancipation from male dominance (cf. the example of

njang-njang in Guinea-Bissau, quoted above). Hence, '*engendering development*' is not just a normative end in itself, but can be deemed to have positive repercussions on economic and political development, too (cf. Stern 2002:13)[27].

African cultures of innovation in Benin, Haiti and Brazil are especially suited for an in-depth study of these articulations, not just because of their common socio-cultural heritage, but because the continuing cultural exchange, which is not restricted to bilateral contacts but concerns the exchange of cultures of innovation between Africa and the global African Diaspora as well.

In times of globalization, the figuration of embeddedness of conflicting groups and cultures is influenced to a growing degree by transnational social spaces This holds true especially for the articulation of African cultures and societies with those of the African Diaspora. Again, the impact of these pluri-local and transnational social spaces is ambiguous, it can be conflict reducing or enhancing[28].

3. Case Studies: Vodun-Based Cultures of Innovation and Empowerment in Benin, Brazil and Haiti in Times of Globalization

The impact of cultural change on development is strong, but highly ambiguous. For example, similar sentiments or value-orientations may work in opposite directions, depending on the social setting and the nature of the group involved. Seemingly identical process-innovations, like popular movements for a democratic renewal and for sovereign National Conferences in Benin and Togo, for instance in the early 1990s, resulted in opposite outcomes. The sustainability of cultural innovations is even more difficult to ascertain. What

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[27] Examples are given by Chamlee (1993), who shows that women in the Ghanaian informal sector created an innovative culture of trust-based business relations; Bawah et al. 1999 showed how women in North Ghana, assisted by the Navrongo family planning program, implemented emancipative methods of birth control against the resistance of formal decision makers who preferred to keep the traditional regulations of the bride price. Burger, Collier, and Gunning (1996) demonstrated that household-heads in Kenya adapted innovations predominantly from innovators of the same sex (quoted in World Bank 2001:207).

[28] This has been analyzed by the author in more detail by the example of anti-witchcraft movements in South Africa and in Ghana (cf. Kohnert 2003, 2004). Further cults of counter-violence are to be found in the history of the African Diaspora in Latin America, e.g. the liberation movement of the Haitian slaves during colonial rule and the slave revolts of the *quilombos* in Brazil in the 19th century. In this respect the more recent confrontation between the movement of landless laborers (*peyzan malere)* and their rulers in Haiti may be worth mentioning too (cf. Ewen 2003), as well as the violent classes between the *movimento Negro* and their Brazilian rulers (cf. Hanchard 1998, 1999). However, apart from the successful Haitian slave uprising, most of these 'cultural revolutions' were not sustainable.

appeared as development oriented improvement in the short run might reveal itself as ob-struction in the long run, and vice versa. Nevertheless, cultural change is neither casual nor arbitrary. History shows that it can and should be directed.

A significant number of cultural innovations were inspired by religion. A well-known ex-ample is the popular movement for democratization and human rights, driven by the libera-tion theology in the Americas since the 1970s (cf. Smith 1991; Hayes 1996). In the following I shall elaborate on comparative studies of the less known example of popular movements for democratization in Benin, Haiti, and Brazil. They share as common denominator the strong influence of cultures of innovation inspired by an enlightened *vodun* (including its Afro-American equivalent), and different related denominations of Christian orientation on de-mocratic transition and empowerment of the poor. Further comparative studies on the ar-ticulation of agents of cultural change linked to African religion and 'traditional medicine' HIV-prevention and indigenous knowledge in African societies are envisaged.

The following comparative case studies, intended for further hypothesis generation within the framework of the above contribution to theory-building show, however, that any mono-causal explanation of cultural change, which focuses solely on religion or another single variable, is doomed to fail. The outcome of cultures of innovation is a process which de-pends to a large extend on the articulation with competing cultures. Only a differentiated analysis, taking due care of the articulation of different strands of cultural innovations and their linkage to social stratification, transnational social spaces and globalization as outlined above, makes for their explicatory and prognostic power.

Benin: Multiple Local Cultures of Innovation, Exemplary for the Whole of Francophone Africa

Benin, formerly known as Dahomey, is located at the West African bight of Benin, sand-wiched between the neighboring giant Nigeria and the former German colony Togo. It has a reputation as both, the *quartier Latin* of francophone Africa and the cradle of *vodun*. The Be-nin democratic renewal (*renouveau démocratique)* which started in 1989, thereby putting an end to nearly two decades of autocratic socialist rule, was welcomed as a model for democ-ratization in sub-Saharan Africa. Not least in light of its spread effects, Benin provides an illustrative example of the impact of innovative cultures on democratization, rooted in, and inseparably linked to transnational social spaces, as explained below:

    i.   *Conflicting cultures of opposition movements imposed the democratic renewal*. Contrary to a widespread belief, the second wind of change in Benin was less determined by the globalized effects of the fall of the Berlin Wall, but was prepared and triggered off by popular indigenous opposition movements. As shown below, they were inspired by

development oriented ethics of Christian organizations, and they closely interacted with agents of change encouraged by an modern universalistic *vodun*[29]. While creating different, often conflicting cultures of innovation in the 1980s, they nevertheless upheld a common aim, paving the way for the fall of the Kérékou-regime (cf. Banégas 1995, 1995a).

ii. These movement can be broadly classified as belonging in two categories: popular movements of resistance 'from below', and elitist opposition movements. The former comprised organizations from different denominations, notably trade unions and peasant groups which opposed the payment of *per captia* tax, obstructed or circumvented public regional integrated development programs (CARDERs), and promoted a general climate of passive resistance and civic disobedience. The outlawed communist party (Parti communiste du Dahomey, PCD, founded in 1977), which established its headquarters in two rural districts (Djakotomé, in Mono province, and Boukoumbé in Atakora), strove to unite these socio-cultural forces in a common opposition front since 1988 and played an outstanding role in the organization of mass protest in December 1989 (cf. Banégas 1995:29).

iii. The opposition groups of the elite, spearheaded by the student and teachers unions, were embedded in the informal network of the *quartier Latin* of francophone Africa[30]. They had a decisive impact on the democratization process in general, and on the organization of the sovereign National Conference (1990) in Cotonou in particular[31]. The latter initiated a peaceful alternation of political power structures in Benin at the national level. This *renouveau démocratique*, mainly organized by an educated elite, embracing different ethnic, regional, professional and religious groups of the civil society, was admired as a shining example by other African countries. Although even marginalized groups, like peasant-, and local development associations received a chance to participate in it (cf. Banégas 1995a; Ehuzu 1990; ONEPI 1990), the

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[29] As, for example, represented by the syncretistic movement for the inculturation of Christianity and the reinterpretation of the *vodun (Mewihwendo*, or *Sillon Noir*, cf. Adoukonou 1989); or by the *Atingali* and *Glo- and Kpe-vodun*, imported from Ghana, cf. Tall 1995, 1995a, 2003; Mayrargue 2002; Aguessy 1993.

[30] The expression *"quartier Latin"* refers to the high percentage of an educated francophone elite in Benin, compared with other French speaking African countries (cf. Bako Arifari 1995). However, we should bear in mind that the Benin elite, since the advent of colonial rule, maintained close social and political links not only to Paris, but to their peers in Dakar, Abidjan and Lomé, as well. Therefore, the network of the *quartier Latin* is inseparable from the transnational social spaces of French speaking West Africa.

[31] In this context the "National Conference" refers to the tradition of the "*états généraux*" of the French revolution (cf. Eboussi-Boulaga 1993; Adamon 1995; Heilbrunn 1995; Houngbedji 1994; Monga 1995; Monkotan 1991; Nwajiaku 1994; Séhouéto 1994).

grass-roots opposition movements, the 'primitive rebels' in Eric Hobsbawm's terms, who had paved the way to this first successful civil coup d'état in Africa, were later disregarded and deprived of the fruits of their resistance.

iv. *Ambiguous role of African religion and of traditional leaders:* The democratization process in Benin had been initiated and promoted to a great extend by the 'return of the religious' (Mayrargue 2002), i.e. by rival popular movements, inspired by modern anti-witchcraft cults, incorporated into universalistic *vodun* as well as the Pentecostals, and the catholic church, all united in its opposition to the 'socialist project' of the Kérékou-area which had become incredible (cf. Tall 1995, 1995a). Whereas the Marxist policy of the Kérékou-regime in the 1970s and early 1980s regarded African religions and their representatives as a 'relict of feudalism', being highly suspect of the role of the Catholic church as well; the latter played an important role as mediator and broker of the *renouveau démocratique.* This resulted in a change of roles in its leading ranks, notably of Mgr. De Souza, archbishop of Cotonou, who became president of the National Conference and of the interim government. But the failure of the 'socialist project' resulted also in a new legitimization of an enlightened *vodun*, of charismatic Christian churches (like the *Chrétiens célestes),* and new anti-witchcraft cults (cf. Tall 2003:77, 87). Occult belief systems, notably the *vodun* and the belief in magic and witchcraft, played an ambiguous role in Benin's development process (cf. Kohnert 1996:1351; Tall 1995)[32]. Depending on local historical pre-conditions and the actual social setting in different provinces, not all "traditional authorities" (like village heads and *vodun* priests) were necessarily 'progressive'. Some of them acted as intermediaries and facilitators of indigenous innovative capacity that promoted development, others operated as stumbling blocks of cultural change (Elwert-Kretschmer 1995; Tall 2003).

v. *Indigenous civic sub-cultures in West Africa as pioneers of transition*: In addition, interactive civic (sub-)cultures in different West African countries contributed to indigenous cultural innovations "from below", which manifested themselves for example in local political theatre groups of students, griots and NGOs, which prepared the political terrain for the process of democratic renewal in Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire (cf. Séhouéto 1994; Monga 1995). At the same time, dynamic Fulbe intellectuals acted at the meso and micro level as political and cultural brokers of indige-

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[32] On the eve of the electoral campaign for the presidential elections in 1991, the contender of M. Kérékou, and subsequent winner of the elections, Nicéphore Soglo, was empoisoned and nearly died. The crime was attributed to political adversaries of Soglo, who were accused of employing witchcraft with the help of vodun witch doctors (cf. interview with N. Soglo in L'Intelligent, No. 2094, February 27, 2001:33).

nous cultural change in Northern Benin. They promoted a new, more development oriented ethnic identity, based on the mediation of the aims of the modern nation state and traditional elements of Fulbe culture (cf. Bierschenk 1995).

vi. *Bottom-up process of indigenous cultural change and a transition dominated by aid, local development brokers and venality.* As a result, initially the transition process in Benin had been promoted not so much by a transfer of Western culture, knowledge, technology or finance but by a bottom-up process of indigenous cultural change. Later on, it became dominated by a top-down propagation of concepts of Western political culture, focusing on institutional change and 'good governance', as promoted by the conditioning of official development assistance. Local brokers of development aid accelerated this change in cultural policy, which was however ill-adapted to sustainable development programs(cf. Bierschenk et al. 1993).

vii. *A globalized culture of Human Rights standards strengthened the Constitutional Court in Cotonou as an effective third tiers of government.* Driven by a strong impetus of liberation from the autocratic rule of the past (i.e. the "Beninism-Marxism" of Kérékou's socialist regime, 1972-89), and by globalized standards of Human Rights (backed by the international donor community), the Constitutional Court under the guidance of the first president Elisabeth Poignon, established a new culture of independent judiciary as an effective counterbalance of power at the national level (cf. Rotman 2004). Unfortunately, this promising development did not trickle down as expected to the lower levels of the Benin judicial system. The latter remained highly corrupt and exposed to the politics of the 'African command state' (cf. Elwert 2001; Kohnert 1997). Subsequently, the 'politics of the belly' once more gained predominance, even in the decisions of the Benin High Courts, during the role-back strategy under the second and third Kérékou regime (1996-2003).

viii.*Promising development of a free press as fourth tier of control of the state in the early 1990s, weakened by globalized standards of media markets, poor training and venality.* In the early stages of transition, the free press in Benin[33], driven by highly motivated local agents of cultural change, acted more as an effective control of government and state administration than the public legislative institutions. However, the commercialization and decline of professional ethics of journalists, caused among others by the daily strife for survival in a highly competitive but limited market, affected the role of the media as fourth tiers of state control (cf. Adjovi 2002). Nowadays many tabloids tend

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[33] Benin still has the highest rank on the index of press freedom, of all African states; it was on about the same level as United Kingdom in 2005, according to the Press Freedom Index, published regularly by *Reporters sans frontiers*.

to be riddled with venality and tainted by globalized Western standards of the rainbow press (cf. Frère 1995).

ix. *Mushrooming local private radio stations as transmission belt of cultural change.* Well-adapted local media, notably mushrooming local private radio stations, based on a close intermarriage of international technology transfer and local culture, are helpful in promoting political innovations at the grass-root level (cf. Grätz 1997; Frère 1995). This stands in stark contrast to the chronically ill adapted top-down public rural radio extension programs of the former socialist Kérékou-regime.

x. *A long established culture of a transit economy (Entrepôt Trade), driven by globalization and innovative entrepreneurs, promoted economic growth more effectively than aid.* Democratization without economic growth is hardly sustainable. In this respect Benin profited from a long established culture of parallel trans-border markets (transit economy, cf. l'Etat-entrepôt, Igué/Soulé 1992), dating back to pre-colonial socio-cultural pre-colonial West African trading networks of Hausa and Yoruba traders. An innovative shadow economy, pushed by lucrative transnational parallel markets (transit economy towards landlocked neighboring Sahel countries and Nigeria), which flourished in the aftermath of the Nigerian oil-boom and the 'second wind of change', probably contributed more to Benin's economic growth than the massive influx of development aid (cf. Beuving 2004; Igué/Soule 1992). In this respect, the 'politics of the belly', combined with the fragile state monopoly of violence and taxation of the new liberal-democratic state, which have often been considered a barrier to economic growth, may have created, quite to the contrary, a growth-inducing momentum.

xi. *The newly established laissée-faire culture, cultivated as antithesis to the centralized economy of the socialist state, had ambiguous effects.* The ongoing top-down program of liberalization and privatization of parastatals, enforced, last but not least, by aid conditionality of international donors, had ambiguous effects. While it was meant to guarantee effective management, in some central cases, it rather tended to create a symbiosis and concentration of economic and political power during the implementation process. Powerful entrepreneurs, enriched through political patronage, transformed themselves into new political leaders (cf. the case of multi-millionaire Séfou Fagbohoun and his influential political party *Mouvement Africain pour la Démocratie et le Progrès*, MADEP)[34].

xii. *A development inducing written local culture might be more effectively stimulated through promotion of informal literature markets than by top-down aid.* The development of a

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[34] The general secretary of MADEP, Mrs. Antoine Idji Kolawolé, former minister of foreign affairs, was elected as president of the Benin National Assembly on April 24, 2003.

written culture (*Schriftkultur*, in the holistic German sense, which is not restricted to alphabetization), is an important means in promoting indigenous innovations. However, it is still in its initial stage in Benin, in spite of decades of development aid to this end. Encouraging local market mechanisms to promote a written culture on the regional and national levels (like the Onitsha market literature in neighboring Nigeria) might be more promising than top-down development aid (cf. Elwert 1997).

xiii. *Top-down approaches of decentralization promoted 'politics of the belly' rather than actual empowerment.* Decentralization policy, as promoted by massive development aid since the early 1990s, was readopted and transformed by local political actors according to their own special logic and interests. This did not necessarily lead to an increase in local participation, democracy, or rule of law (in the Western sense) at the local level (cf. Alber 1997; Alber/Sommer 1999; Bierschenk 2003, 1999; Grätz 1996).

Haiti: Democratic Transition Driven by Subversive Cultures of Innovation, Inspired by Vodun

The specific blend of religious cultures of innovation (vodun and Catholicism, cf. I (i)&(ii) above) that stimulated democratic transition in Benin, had an impact in Haiti as well, although in a different manner. Nevertheless, the stakeholders as well as outside observers, went to great length to stress the common African roots of their venture with lasting repercussions. Haiti is the only country worldwide, where African slaves, guided by *vodun* as liberation theology, defeated their colonial masters, establishing their own free state already in the 19th century. Since the 1980s, democratic transition was again driven by subversive cultures of innovation, inspired by vodun and Christian liberation theology.

i. The Haitian vodun acted as modern driving force of democratic transition, along with transnational networks of liberation theology, against the firm resistance of the religious and political establishment: Since the slave rebellion of 1791-94 and the subsequent liberation of Haiti, the Haitian variety of vodun (vaudoun or vodou, in French spelling, dominated by Dahomean and Yoruba elements, imported by the slave trade) was the religion of the people, and crucial in forming the Haitian ethos and nationality. About 90% of the population adhere to it. However, the overwhelming part of the elite, politicians and development experts alike, publicly denounced it as superstition, relict of the past and impediment to development[35]. In addition, Catholizism, recognized by the concordat of 1860 as only officially religion in Haiti, has

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[35] Cf. Rotberg 1976:356: "It is often said that vodun kept Haiti backward. Probably the reverse is true: vodun flourished because the rulers of Haiti denied their multitudinous citizenry a chance to transform a socially and economically stagnant rural life."

tried in vain to eliminate vodun[36], even though it maintained a fragile peace with its rival on the operational level by incorporating elements of its liturgy in its own service since the 1950s (cf. Corbett 1988). Thus, the church in fact only copied a tactic, successfully employed by adherents of vodun already some three hundred years before. Then, African slaves had camouflaged their continuing worship of vodun, outlawed by the church and the colonial authorities, by integrating Christian elements in its own pantheon. Vodun was officially recognized as state religion besides Catholicism only by the second Aristide government (2000-2004) in a desperate act of populist legislation in April 2003[37]. Nevertheless, in informal politics, vodun had always had a great impact, both on the local and the national level. Various political leaders instrumentalized the cult with ambiguous effects, ranging from the emancipation from slavery (the only slave rebellion worldwide that succeeded in creating a proper nation state), to the brutal oppression by the tonton macouts, who were assisted by corrupted vodun priests under the Duvalier dynasty, which ended in political turmoil in 1986 (cf. Rotberg 1997:28-29; Laguerre 1990; Whitten/Torres 1998:526-528; Michel/Bellegarde-Smith 2006). Thus, during political transition, antagonistic cultures of innovation in Haitian's informal sector, each reinterpreting vodun in their own group's interest, portraying themselves as agent of change and 'modernizer', were interlocked in a deadly confrontation (cf. Averill 1997).

ii. To counteract dictatorship and gross human rights violation by the Duvalier regime and its successors, a grass-root movement for the empowerment of the poor and marginalized, called Ti Legliz (Creole, literally meaning 'small church'), came into being in the 1970s. Religion, both vodun and the Haitian variety of Christian theol-

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[36] The hierarchy of the Catholic church upheld its critical attitude *vis à vis* the *Ti Legliz* movement up to the present days, as shown by the following examples. On September 11, 1988, Aristide's church, Saint-Jean Bosco, was attacked during service by *tonton makouts*, in an unsuccessful attempt on Aristide's life, wounding 70, killing thirteen worshipers, and destroying the building. Haitians began to compare their hero to the early biblical prophets and to Makandal, the legendary vodun warrior-priest. The church hierarchy, however, just called for reconciliation and condemned the popular church for its political involvement. Two month later, Aristide was dismissed from the Rome-based Salesian order (cf. Taylor 1991:817-19). The highest representative of the church in Haiti, archbishop of Port-au-Prince, Mgr. Ligondé, was accused of siding with the plotters in the abortive coup against Aristide in January 1990, and fled the country. Immediately after the military coup of September 30, 1991, which ousted the Aristide government, the Vatican was the only country to recognize the regime of General Cédras, the coup leader immediately (cf. Jalabert 2004:3, 5).

[37] By this decree the state recognized baptisms, marriages, and funerals performed by vodun officials; this constituted a significant step in guaranteeing religious freedom and in breaking down Haitians social class structure.

ogy of liberation played a decisive role in this movement[38]. They progressively transformed these ecclesial base organizations into 'grass-root communities' with a three-fold vocation, religious, social and political. The movement gained full momentum with the religious-political campaigns of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a charismatic Catholic priest of an impoverished parish in Port-au-Prince, in the aftermath of the deposition of 'Baby Doc' (Duvalier jun.). Subsequently, the movement expanded fast, through the formation of thousands of Ti Legliz and similar Tet Ansamn peasant groups, notably in the countryside and among the youth and slum dwellers in the cities. They were considered as cradle of the 'l'Organisation populaire Famni Lavalas', forerunner of the renowned party 'Lavalas' or 'Famni Lavalas' (Creole, 'family avalanche' in English, referring to the biblical flood); a title borrowed from a popular peasant song (cf. Kuelker 1998; Corbett et al. 1999; Jalabert 2004; Taylor 1992; Rotberg 1976) designed to bring Aristide to power. As a consequence the movement was deemed a serious menace by the power elite that acted accordingly. Politically motivated persecution, intimidation, torture, imprisonment and murder were at the order of the day. Even the US-government and the CIA, which sided with the Haitian political establishment, realized the revolutionary potential of vodun as being greater than that of the Haitian Communist Party at that time (cf. Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, in: Corbett et al. 1999), an assessment which proved to be quite accurate. Notwithstanding, the death of thousands of activist, and at least nine unsuccessful murder attempts of the movement's leader, four years later in December 1990, J. B. Aristide became the first freely and democratically elected president in the country's history. The population celebrated the event as a 'second independence', with reference to the liberation from slavery some 200 years ago. Yet the traditional power

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[38] One indicator for the 'marriage' between Haitian liberation theology (*teyoloji liberasyon*) and vodun was the close linkage with Boukman's Prayer (cf. below) as base of the *Ti Legliz* philosophy. The prayer, inspired by the wisdom of vodun, had been already once before the call to action by Boukman Dutty, a *houngan* or vodou priest, that launched the Haitian Revolution, on August 14, 1791, at the Bwa Kayiman Vodun ceremony. Some two hundred years later it contributed again to the formation of specific Haitian liberation theology. – The following is an English translation of Boukman's Righteous Prayer: "The god who created the earth; who created the sun that gives us light. The god who holds up the ocean; who makes the thunder roar. Our God who has ears to hear. You who are hidden in the clouds; who watch us from where you are. You see all that the white has made us suffer. The white man's god asks him to commit crimes. But the god within us wants to do good. Our god, who is so good, so just, He orders us to revenge our wrongs. It's He who will direct our arms and bring us the victory. It's He who will assist us. We all should throw away the image of the white men's god who is so pitiless. Listen to the voice for liberty that sings in all our hearts." (cf. in: www.margueritelaurent.com/campaigns/campaignone/presswork/freeprisoners.html#prayer, June 16, 2006)

elite, the military and economic establishment, reacted with a roll-back strategy. Only eight month later, Aristide, the legitimately elected leader, was ousted by a military coup on September 30, 1991.

iii. Popular music, stimulated by a modern interpretation of vodun, was crucial in installing a subversive freedom culture, promoting democratic transition: There is a surprisingly strong relationship between popular Haitian music, power and politics. This was brought to the fore by the fascinating work of Gage Averill (1997), "A day for the hunter, a day for the prey", which is likely to become a reference book on the subject matter. The ethnographically informed social history of the linkage between power politics, culture and pop music establishes four points beyond doubt: First, "Haitian politics and more generally the struggle for power have insinuated themselves into every arena of musical expression. Popular music, as a discursive terrain, is a site at which power is enacted, acknowledged, accommodated, signified, contested, and resisted." (cf. Averill 1997: preface, xi-xv). Second, just like in the realm of the political economy of religion, the instrumentalization of music in politics is highly ambiguous. It can and has been used both as tool to justify and camouflage despotic rule, like under the pretext of 'noirisme' by the Duvalier's regime, as well as a means of fighting by the oppressed in their struggle for empowerment, as illustrated below in the case of the angaje (politically engaged) music of pop-groups like Boukman Eksperyans. Third, since the 1950s, the message, songs and rhythms of vodun have increasingly been incorporated into popular Haitian music, albeit not in an unchanged 'traditional', but an adapted way, corresponding to the actual social and political conditions as 'high modernity'. Finally, the Haitian diaspora, forced into emigration by economic need or by political harassment, played a crucial part in creating a specific Haitian freedom culture (Kilti libète, in Creole) with their engaging poetry, drama and music, linking 'traditional' peasant culture with progressive politics. The 'unfinished migration' of the slave trade, combined with continuing fluctuating migration of Haitians of all classes, due to different, often opposed economic or political reasons, contributed to a dynamic and inspiring culture with an engaged poetry, drama and music, which had a profound impact on the essentially transnational composition of Haitian identity, including its intimate relationship to the West African vodun cosmology (cf. Averill 1997:161-207; Kuelker 1998).

iv. The pop-group Boukman Eksperyans is an outstanding example for such angaje music. It formed part of the popular resistance movement Operasyon Dechoukaj[39], which contributed to the fall of an autocratic regime. Like other popular activists of mizik rasin, or new roots-music, e.g. Manno Charlemagne, Boukan Ginen and the roots band Ram, they combined the liberating aspects of Haitian vodun, as represented by the legend about the vodun priest Boukman Dutty (see above), and visions of global syncretism of world religions, with demands for empowerment of the poor, elements of rara carnival, Afro-pop and American rock music. The band was founded by Lolo Beaubrun and his wife Mimerose in the late 1970s. Already from their political exile they effectively contributed to the empowerment of Aristide as president. Likewise, from the underground they took active part in the cultural revolution which swept across the country in the late 1980s. Yet, later on they proved to be equally critical about human rights violations of the second Aristide government. Among their biggest success were 'Voudou Adjae', the first ever Haitian song nominated for a Grammy award, and the carnival song Kè m pa Sote (my heart doesn't jump, I'm not afraid), which helped to bring down military dictatorship in 1990 and became the campaign song for Aristide's successful election campaign. Kalfou danjere (dangerous crossroads), composed in 1992 as comment on the military coup which ousted Aristide in 1991[40], became an international hit. It was listed in the World music charts and nominated for the Grammy award in 1992. This even enhanced the positive reception of the protest song among Haitian's opposition. With the song the group prepared the floor for Aristide's return to power in 1994 (cf. McAlistar 2002; Averill 1997; Ewen 2003:11-13; Boukman Eksperyans 2004).

The Brazilian African Diaspora – Empowerment of the Poor, Guided by Afro-Brazilian religion: The Candomblé and Quilombo Movement

Brazil is the 5th most populous, and at the same time one of the most unequal countries in the world (Gini coefficient 0,61). People of African descent constitute about half of total population and still suffer under a long history of marginalization since the early days of the

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[39] *Dechoukaj*, or uprooting (the wrongdoing) in Creole, or *mawonaj*, meaning resistance, originally from slavery, currently from any form of oppression; the expression has the same roots as the English word Maroon.

[40] Translation of the Creole text of the song *Kalfou danjere* (dangerous crossroad) by Averill (1997:198-199): "Liars, you'll be in deep trouble / At the crossroads of the Congo people / O wou o, the crossroads of the Congo people / We're not doing any killing / We're not going to play that game … / Ginen is not Bizango"; i.e. Ginen vodun (of countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea, notably ancient Dahomey), as explained by Averill, is not one of other more violent secret cults; hereby the group underlined their peaceful approach of spiritual resistance.

slave trade. The Afro-Brazilian community (about 80 million) is renowned as the largest Nationality group of African descent next to Nigeria and the major group within the global African Diaspora.

i.   Racial marginalization in the aftermath of the slave trade was encountered by Afro-Brazilians with recourse to their common African culture: Poverty has a racial face in Brazil, which was often denied by government sources and the power elite alike. Both favored the ideology of a Brazilian 'racial democracy' (cf. Hanchard 1998 for a critique). Black-headed households account for 64% of all poor people in Brazil according to World Bank statistics. There were 35.5 million black against 19.6 million white people living in poverty in Brazil in 2001, and the racial divide is still growing (cf. World Bank 2002). The mean income in black-headed households is 42% of that in white-headed households (cf. Ferreira et al. 2003:73). The generation long resistance of black people against oppression, inequality and marginalization was met with severe repression. The covert recourse to their common African cultural heritage was their decisive strategy to circumvent the most brutal forms of repression, and at the same time to guarantee effectiveness and sustainability of resistance. This strategy shows interesting parallels to the Haitian example which should be followed up by future research in more detail.

ii. The quilombo movement, candomblé and the Movimento Negro, backed by transnational social spaces, were crucial arenas of Black empowerment

iii. Since the early days of slavery up till now, the most crucial social space that allowed for black resistance was within the realm of religion, notably African religion, which the state and the church consequently were keen to suppress as a well (cf. Myatt 1995:64-67). There are different denominations of vodun related forms of belief in Brazil, the most prominent of which is candomblé[41]. Closely linked to these religious social spaces of hidden resistance was the quilombo-movement[42]. It originated from settlements of runaway slaves and comprises black Afro-Brazilian communities formed on the basis of solidarity and their common belief. Afro-Brazilian religion later-

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[41] According to official estimates there exist only three million believers (1.5% of total population) who officially declared *candomblé* as their religion. However, the official census is chronically biased and underestimated. Because of centuries of official persecution and criminalization of Afro-Brazilian religion, many adherents do not want to expose their belief officially (cf. Prandi 2003). According to Afro-Brazilian organizations, about 70 million Brazilians, i.e. some 90% of the black population, participate in the service of *candomblé* or other Afro-Brazilian religions. There exist more than twelve thousand *candomblé* temples (called *terreiros*) in the country, alone 2,230 were registered in Salvador de Bahia.

[42] In the West African language Yoruba, '*quilombo*' means 'housing'. Many slaves rebelled and constituted *quilombo* communities as territories of housing, resistance and social organization.

on became closely linked to the négritude philosophy, imported by African intellectuals who had studied in France and England, and to the Movimento Negro, emerging simultaneously in Brazil in the 1930s (cf. Myatt 1995:71, 109). In 2003 there were 2,228 quilombos with about 30 million ha land and 2 million inhabitants all over the country (cf. UnB Agência 2005; Ministry of Agrarian Development 2005).

iv. The resurgent Movimento Negro, basically a product of the black elite and progressive circles of the theology of liberation, became increasingly politicized in the 1980s, entering several of Brazil's political parties (cf. Hanchard 1998:123-129; Myatt 1995:108). With its vigorous campaigns for the recognition of Afro-Brazilians' civic rights it contributed significantly to the acknowledgment of the quilombos in Brazil's constitution in 1988, the year of the 100th commemoration of the slave liberation[43]. Within the Roman Catholic Church the Movimento Negro became increasingly active in the late 1970s and early 1980s, forming two groups which held a central place in the movement: the Agentes de Pastoral Negro (Agents of the Black Pastoral, APN) and Grupo de União e Consciência Negra (Black Union and Conscience Group, GRUCON; cf. Myatt 1995:130). In accordance with the egalitarian message of the Movimento Negro, the APN was organized in four regional divisions, called quilombos, in allusion to their mundane counterparts. Some were organized by the diocese, others by cities, neighborhoods or other local or regional bodies (cf. Myatt 1995:152-155).

v.   Again the majority of members of APN belonged to the intellectual black elite. Therefore, it is crucial to underline the bearing of social class and belonging on the capacity to mobilize black empowerment in Brazil (cf. Myatt 1995:155; Hanchard 1998:77-98). Even the encouragement of racial consciousness, which was certainly effectively done by the Movimento Negro, does not necessarily lead to corresponding political actions of the stakeholders. In this respect there is hardly any difference to the socio-structural divide between class consciousness and political resistance (cf. Hanchard 1998:160).

vi. Black empowerment and the *quilombo* movement were obstructed by regional and local power elites in the cause of a global culture of progress. Despite the support of empowerment of the black poor by the black elite in Brazil and a vast transnational social network of cooperating local, national and international agencies, like Human Rights Organisations, the church, Brazilian universities, or even the Economic and

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[43] Although the Brazilian constitution of 1988 guarantees return of land titles to *quilombolas* (residents of *quilombos*), so far only 70 communities have had their lands regulated by the federal government. While local and state governments are also authorized to regularize lands, so far there has not been a single initiative to register *quilombo* lands at the local level (cf. de Oliveira 2005: Brazil: Waiting For Their Land of Freedom. November 20, 2005, in: www.boloji.com/wfs4/wfs493.htm, November 22, 2005).

Social Council of the United Nations, they were confronted with continuing or even growing resentment. The Brazilian state, notably on the regional level, and even more local power elites with hidden vested interest obstructed the quilombo movement in the name of progress. A recent UN report on racial discrimination in Brazil revealed several examples of gross human and civic rights violations concerning the quilombistas (supporters of quilombos). It summarizes: "Their lives are in the hands of the landowners and farmers, and they feel as if they are still slaves, without any rights. Despite the 2003 Presidential decree recognizing their rights as citizens (notably their land-tenure rights, D.K.), the acts of violence against them have increased" (UN 2006:14-15). Apparently many municipalities or landowners preferred more profitable 'modern' investments, like tourism, urban development schemes or commercial agriculture, and they obstruct access of the quilombos to land and basic amenities, often misusing funds meant for the development of the quilombos for other purposes.

vii. Obstruction of candomblé by neo-Pentecostals, assisted by market oriented transnational networks. Example of clash of cultures of innovation? Since the late 1970s, US-dominated evangelist neo-Pentecostals promoted a 'Holy war' against Afro-Brazilian religions and attacked candomblé as incarnation of the devil, following the doubtful example of the Roman Catholic Church in colonial times. They were assisted by institutional racism of local or regional governments (cf. UN 2006; Prandi 2003:6; Jeffrey 1997). The most notorious neo-Pentecostal was the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus/Universal Church of the Reign of God (IURD), founded in 1978, which claimed 3.5 million members in Brazil and maintained missions in 35 other countries (cf. Jeffrey 1997). The church propagated a "theology of prosperity" in which individual money-making is considered as pleasantly to God. It was widely criticized for corruption, however, the enormous financial means of the globalized Pentecostals facilitate their campaigns. One example is their control over the media, acquired through heavy internationally backed investment and supported by the neo-liberal concepts of an "open markets ideology", as propagated by the international donor community (cf. Jeffrey 1997)[44]. In addition the Pentecostals threatened priests of the candomblé

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[44] Cf. Jeffrey 1997: "…Paulo Ayres Mattos, the Methodist bishop of Recife, says the way new religious movements like the IURD use the media illustrates how 'the religion of the market is triumphing'. Ayres claims that defining neo-Pentecostalism in Brazil is 'to talk about something that's as much a media phenomenon as a religious phenomenon. It's a product of the media, of marketing, of religious businesses appealing to 30 million evangelical consumers'. …For Ayres and many other observers, a significant element of evangelical church growth in Brazil reflects the conversion of religion into a commodity."

temples (terreiros), assaulted their worshippers and financed aggressive campaigns of conversion aimed at adherents of Afro-Brazilian religions. This led among others to the discrimination of school children and adults who dared to confess their religion. State agencies did not intervene against this religious intolerance and open racism, on the contrary the police often assisted in the aggression (cf. UN 2006: No. 46).

4. Potential of Indigenous Cultures of Innovation in Times of Glocalization

Enlarging the range of choice by promoting stimuli for innovative actors and by improving the competition of cultures and ideas is an important means of promoting development. However, we have to give due regard to the serious problem of asymmetric power relations in a globalized world (cf. Sen 2002:18-19). The hubris of the *high modernist ideology* (Scott 1998), still propagated by Western and African experts alike (cf. Kohnert 1995 for a critical evaluation), is not only tainted by the dangers of euro-centrism and top-down approaches. It also diverts attention from exploring the potential of indigenous cultural innovations, and worst of all, it tends to undermine the informal social and economic structures of indigenous cultures, the ground on which local innovations might otherwise flourish.

In general, cultures of innovation are, beyond any doubt, powerful stimuli for agents of change. However, awareness does not necessarily lead to political action, and not all cultures of innovation in the informal sector have positive effects on the fate of the poor. In order to have a sustainable positive impact, they must be embedded in a development enhancing social structure. Notably their articulation with social stratification and gender is crucial for the outcome of the innovation process. In this respect, there are still more open questions than answers. For example, future, more detailed studies should explore the reasons for the apparent discrepancy between the successful political grass-roots movements inspired by vodun in Benin or Haiti, and the rather elitist *Movimento Negro* analyzed above.

Indigenous cultural innovations (as defined above) are c.p. more suited to promote sustainable development than externally induced innovations with questionable potential of adaptation, notably if they are reduced to one-dimensional categorizations and identities (cf. the sharp critique of such approaches by Sen 2006).

Transnational social networks play an increasing role in promoting the interaction of cultures and in transmitting cultural innovations into the informal sector which might be more readily adapted than innovations imposed by official aid or formal institutions. The impact of pluri-local social spaces on the interactive process of cultural change and on the diffusion of innova-

tions in the informal sector is not restricted to the educated elite. It concerns different social strata on macro, meso and micro levels, as shown above in comparative case studies.

It is open to debate, whether the process of commercialization of social relations promoted by globalization, and the accompanying spread of venality, violence, and criminalization of African states and societies affects cultural change and economic development positively or negatively. Examples of commercialization of religion by neo-Pentecoastals, like in the above case of Brazil, certainly are to be considered as barriers to human development. But notwithstanding justified general human rights concerns or individual value judgments, the culture of commercialization of social relations might under certain conditions objectively contribute to the process of primary accumulation[45].

To put it in a nutshell, the globalized western culture of innovation, as propagated by major aid institutions, does not necessarily lead to empowerment or improvement of the well-being of the stakeholders. On the contrary, it often blocks viable indigenous innovation cultures. However, the latter are not *per se* the better alternatives. All depends on their embeddedness in development oriented social structures.

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[45] On different, sometimes contradictory explanations of growing markets of violence in Africa and its impact on development, as well as on divergences enhanced by cleavages between different academic disciplines, cf. Richards/Vlassenroot (2002). They propose a sociological concept based on theories of solidarity and labor division vs. a utilitarian economic concept as presented by Collier 2000a or Addison et al. 2002. For discussions on the concept of markets of violence cf. in addition Elwert et al. 1999. – For a critical review of the debate on the role of primary accumulation in capitalist development and the articulation of modes of production in Africa cf. Kohnert 1982:62-241.

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