TASK

(Tapping African Societal Knowledge)

African Societal Analysis

ASA

Analyse Sociétale Africaine

The ASSN Think Tank / Le think tank de l'ASSN

ASA

(African Societal Analysis/Analyse Sociétale Africaine)

News from sub-Saharan Africa highlights bluntly the **necessity** to have a **more subtle understanding of socio-cultural dynamics** specific to the **African continent**.

Launched by the **African Security Sector Network**, the **think tank "African Societal Analysis/Analyse Sociétale Africaine"** (**ASA**)[1] proposes to **help decision-makers** better **grasp sociological realities** within which the **security and development governance** in Africa is rooted.

The ASA's expertise, which mobilizes a **network of African experts** with daily close links with **grassroots**, highlights the **role of non-states actors, local or transnational networks** as well as so-called **informal standards and practices**, throughout the following **seven poles**:
- Pole 1: **Overview by country**;
- Pole 2: **Traditional authorities, community memberships and social solidarities / exclusions**;
- Pole 3: **Religions and religious networks**;
- Pole 4: **Gender**;
- Pole 5: **Informal security and justice**;
- Pole 6: **Social change and emerging stakeholders**;
- Pole 7: **Africa and international networks**.

While **completing** analysis based on **government institutions and legally established stakeholders**, the ASA proposes thus a **new approach**, focused on **trends in-depth structuring African societies**.

The **ASA think tank** that makes **sociological and anthropological knowledge** on Africa **readily useable**, aims thus to **helping overcome resistance encountered by security and development policies**, but **also enabling to identify new opportunities that could increase the impact** of those policies on the field.

The ASA approach **relies on "institutional mapping"** presented both on **textual and visual manner** (computer graphics) accompanied by **operational recommendations** that are readily accessible via **different mediums**:
- **Short analytical notes** released **in French and English** on a **weekly basis by email and posted on social networks** and on the **ASSN web site**;
- **Tailored expertise** (case studies) on **societal and cultural dynamics of today's Africa**;
- **Training via distance learning** (e-learning resources, video supports, tele-briefings via visio conference or via Skype, Webinars) or **on site training courses**.

By **innovating through the use of indicators** that are **most often disregarded and by the production of original carriers**, the ASA's objective is threefold:
- **Reinforce with new parameters the watchdog and early warning systems, crisis prevention and conflict resolution, including mediation processes more rooted in local and societal context;**
- **Support security and development policies formulation, based on a deeper understanding of local realities;**
- **Connect decision-makers with a new community of African experts.**

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[1] The ASA think tank is launched to perpetuate the ASSN research program "Hybrid Security Governance in Africa" funded by the IDRC (International Development Research Centre) of Canada.

ASA in 8 questions/answers

Launched by the **African Security Sector Network (ASSN**), the think tank **Societal Intelligence of Africa** (ASA) proposes an original reading template of today's Africa, which aims to be **innovative in three respects**:
- Firstly through **highlighted topics that underline the importance of often disregarded parameters as they pertain to the informal domain**;
- Secondly through the **formats of disseminated documents, developed based on an "institutional mapping" technique**;
- Finally, **through the experts mobilized, whether African anthropologists or sociologists**.

Why the ASA? The diagnosis

The analysis of recent crisis that occurred in many African countries – Malian crisis, Libyan crisis, bloody attacks in Cameroun, Niger and Chad – as well as the "**revenge of societies**" as witnessed for example through the peaceful revolution that occurred in **Burkina Faso**, demonstrate the need to **better understand the socio-cultural context** within which security and development policies are implemented. These events, the impacts of which are often felt beyond the African continent, were **most of the times built-up in the margins or boundaries of the state domain**. The **ignorance of the cultural and societal context** explains partly the **failure of security policies undertaken in Libya** as well as difficulties encountered during the negotiations conducted to **resolve the conflict in northern Mali**. The fact that **phenomena occurring outside of states' boundaries are often overlooked**, for example the major role played by some **Islamic charity non government organizations** in a great number of African countries, explains also the **surprise at the magnitude of rampant Islamism** on the continent.

In fact, the **efficiency of security as well as that of development policies** conducted on the African continent often turns out to be **limited because of a partial knowledge of the environment** in which they are implemented. These policies are **focused mostly on state institutions and governmental and legally established stakeholders, legal frameworks and codified standards**, **while** they aim at embracing the **"governance" concept**, which on the contrary plans to outreach a circle of stakeholders beyond the state. The interest in the African "civil society", a concept inspired mostly from American and European models built around associations, compensates poorly the ignorance of the immense non-state field occupied by numerous African stakeholders.

Works conducted by **experts from the ASSN**[2] have highlighted the **necessity to enrich the analysis of the nexus between security and development**[3]: if understanding and controlling the **state dimension** proves to be important, the **complexity of Africa** calls **inseparably for a deep understanding of societal realities, often informal, within which is rooted the security and development governance of Africa**. Just as it is necessary to take into account the political, economic and social dimension in elaborating public policies, it is also equally **essential to take into account the societal dimension** in order to **elaborate solutions better adapted to the African contexts** that are characterized by the **coexistence of different systems of regulation or governance**.

Ex: *African states rely formally on national armed and security forces. Yet, to ensure security, state agents (the police, the military) are often led to install simultaneously indirect strategies in building alliances with elites at the local level, taking into account traditional standards and authorities as well as customary justice, or by striking tacit agreements with security groups, including militias installed by rural or urban communities.*

The **ASA think tank** aims to **operationalize the understanding of that societal dimension – interacting with the legal domain**. Such an approach aim at **identifying obstacles undermining**

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[2] Bagayoko, N.; Luckham, R.; and Hutchful, E.; "Hybrid Security Governance in Africa: A Concept Paper", *Conflict, Security and Development*, King's College, London, Forthcoming in January 2016.
[3] Particularly works conducted within the framework of research programs "Multi-level Governance and Security" and "Hybrid Security Governance / Gouvernance hybride de la sécurité", funded respectively by the ESRC of United Kingdom and by the IDRC of Canada.

security and development policies conducted in Africa, or on the contrary, in **identifying opportunities enabling the increase of their impact on the field**.

What? Analyzed data

By putting an **emphasis on parameters very rarely taken into account**, the ASA proposes a new approach to **crisis prevention and conflict resolution**, focused on **trends that shape profoundly African societies**.

The objective is to **offer decision-makers** a key input to **understanding non state stakeholders, non official networks and non codified standards, whose influence compete against or to the contrary complete the intervention perimeter of state institutions and legal frameworks**.

The stakeholders, the networks and the standards are analyzed by the "ASA" through different dimensions, divided in **7 expertise poles**:
- Pole 1: **Overview by country (initial focus on West Africa, Sahel and East Africa);**
- Pole 2: **Traditional authorities, community membership and social solidarities / exclusion (e.g.: secret societies, chieftainship, kingdoms, verbal references, traditional justice mechanisms; castes systems; family solidarities and obligations, etc....);**
- Pole 3: Religions and religious networks (e.g.: **Muslim brotherhood, evangelic churches, catholic communities, animism, Buddhism, etc ...**)
- Pole 4: **Gender (e.g.: homosexuality, matrilineal societies, women access to property, etc ...)**
- Pole 5: **Informal security and justice (e.g.: vigilantism, self-defense groups, private societies, smuggling networks, etc ....)**
- Pole 6: **Social changes and emerging stakeholders (e.g.: influence of student associations and networks, labor unions, radios, news websites, rap groups, citizen movements ; etc ...)**
- Pole 7: **African and international networks (e.g.: influence of Indian, Chinese, Lebanese, Turkish diasporas on the African continent).**

Highlighted themes may not seem to have any linkages, direct or indirect, with the security and development issues. Yet, the **ASSN's experience demonstrates that taking into account the underpinning dynamics is valuable in a better apprehension of the environment and implementation of effective policies in Africa**.

Ex. 1: *Measures aiming to encouraging the inclusion of the gender dimension in security sector reform processes should take more into account the influence of secret societies such as the Poro or the Sande in Liberia and Sierra leone, solely controlled by women, but that could contribute, based on the principles they promote, to undermine the foundation of the principle of men-women equality.*

Ex.2: *Some of the development policies implemented in Northern Mali to put an end to the marginalization of communities in the North, such as the Touaregs, have insufficiently measured the importance of social hierarchy existing between different Touareg statutory groups: conflicts between those claiming to belong to Touareg aristocracy (Ifoghas) and those belonging to groups considered to be lesser nobility (Imrads or Bellas) explain the very low impact of certain development programs.*

Ex. 3: *The Malian parliament's rejection of the family code, aiming to introduce more balance in the access to property or to inheritance, was one of the warning signals of the Malian crisis in 2011. That episode has clearly brought to light the important role played by the High Council on Islam dominated by hanbalite Islam (close to wahabism) to the detriment of moderate malekite Islam.*

For who? The public

ASA's analysis addresses **primarily decision-makers involved in conceiving, implementing, and monitoring security and development policies** implemented on the African continent.

Furthermore, explanation brought by the ASA could **also offer new insights to the business community** that needs to understand and master the complexity of the African environment in order to invest and work on the long term within that environment.

Finally, the analyses of the ASA could be **of interest for the media** worried of deciphering more in detail the mechanisms which underlie the African current events.

How? The methodology (neo-institutionalism, anthropology, institutional mapping)

Inspired by the **neo-institutionalism**, the ASA approach considers that **decision-making processes** are not based solely on rational choice or registered within the framework of formal institutions: a much **larger variety of institutions, often informal, are operating in parallel with or inside formal political institutions** and are at stake **within the decision-making processes and public policies**. The influence of **historical trajectories** ("path dependencies") is also highlighted. The ASA **approach** is **thereby based on the analysis of actors** (legally established and without legal existence) **and networks** (structured and non structured) **that interact, in a competitive or additional manner, within the framework of formal or informal institutions**[4].

In order to highlight informal institutions as well as non state stakeholders and non structured networks, not only in their historic trajectory but also in their contemporary realities, the ASA method consists of **using anthropology analysis methods**, assuming that this subject, despite being often considered esoteric, could nevertheless prove to be **a useful guide for action**. Analysis done by ASA aims in particular at **making more accessible and operational (policy-oriented)** knowledge accumulated by anthropology, notably by adding value to **existing literature** which is very often confined within academic environments, **but mostly at conducting investigation on the field**.

ASA relies on an "**institutional mapping" technique** presented **through text and visual aids** (computer graphics):
- The institutional mapping technique's **goal is to portray cohabitation of various authority and legitimacy entities as well as the division of power**[5] **and social regulation mechanisms**.
- This technique enables to **highlight, in a simple and schematic manner, the interactions of non state and state stakeholders as well as non official and structured networks or legal and non codified standards within the framework of formal but also non formal institutions**;
- It offers the possibility of **grasping quickly, in an eye blink, the configurations that prevail in a given country, or of operating focuses on the study of specific cases**.
- Every map is furthermore **completed by a textual and operational analysis (policy oriented)** of the interactions and of power relation prevailing among the various stakeholders, the various

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[4] Formal and informal institutions could be seen as follows:

• Formal institutions are structured by rules and regulations within the frame of legal organizations officially and publically established (constitutions, laws, property rights, etc …) ; formal actors are stakeholders whose legal existence is formally recognized.

• Informal institutions are structured around practices, behavioral standards, and interaction networks socially sanctioned and legitimated (customs, traditions, practices, habits, …) without being codified or legalized. The informal actors are those whose practices, or existence are not legally recognized.

Such a distinction covers, only partially, the distinction between the State and the society. It is inspired by the definition proposed by Helmke and Levitsky : "formal institutions are openly codified in the sense that they are established and communicated through channels that are widely accepted as official (…) . Informal institutions are socially-shared rules, usually unwritten that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels" (Helmke, G. and S. Levitsky, 2004. 'Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda'. *Perspectives on Politics* 2(4), 725–740).

[5] Institutional mapping is concerned with understanding the existing distribution of power.

networks or the various standards highlighted by the visual representation[6]. The ASA develops and **analytical approach, not descriptive, aiming at decrypting the contemporary developments and suggesting proper orientations for the future**.

Exemple 1 : Organization of Urban Security Communities in Nigeria[7]

In order to consult the lively presentation with a focus on each slide, please click on the following link and then click on the 3autoplay Button at the right bottom of the page:

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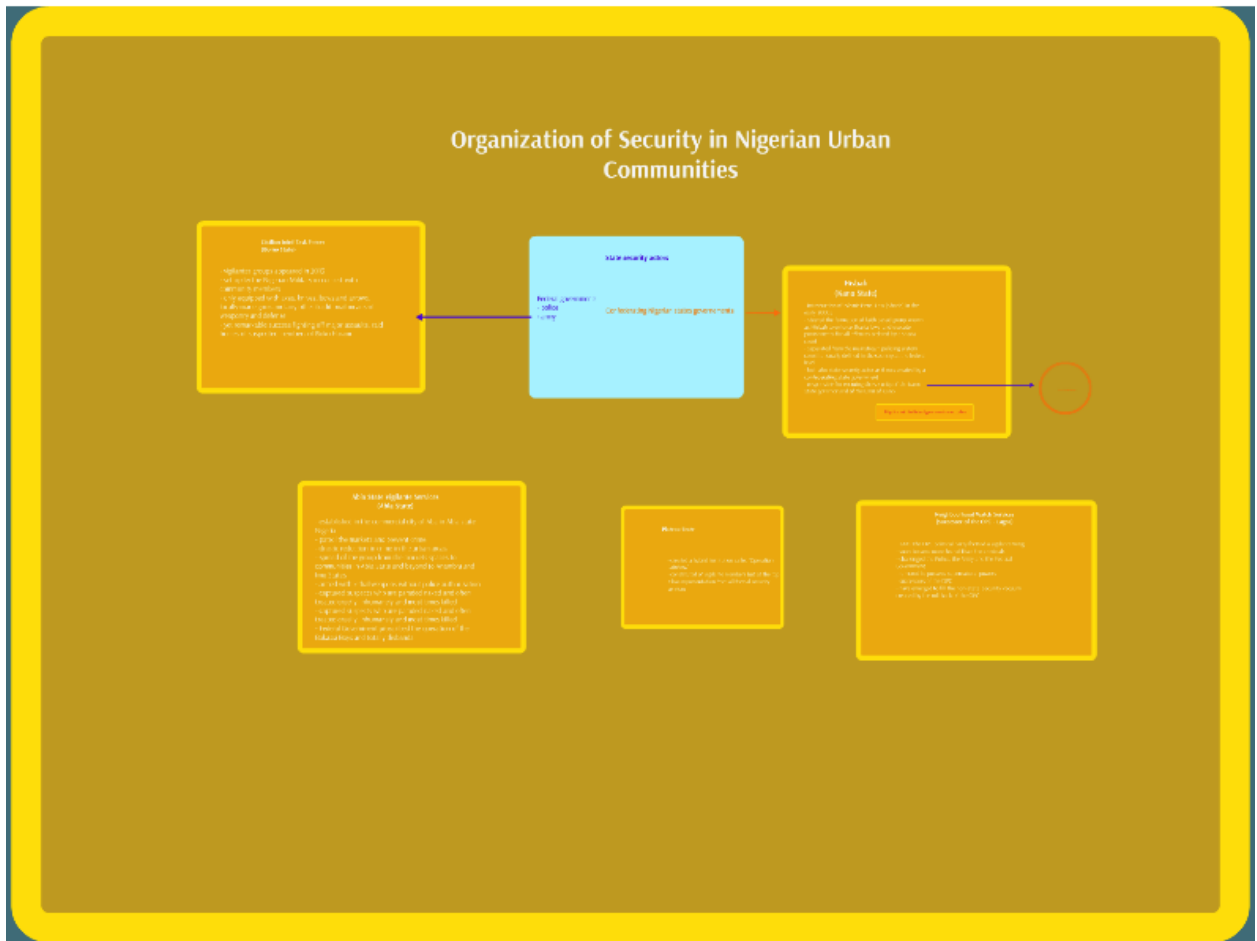
Example: 2 : Institutional mapping of Côte d'Ivoire

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[6] This analysis is based on the distinction established by Helmke and Levitsky that differentiate **4 types of interactions between the formal and informal domains**: a) **complementary interactions**; b) accommodating interactions; c) competitive interactions; d) substitution interactions. Helmke and Levitsky categorize the interactions between formal and informal institutions in four stylized ways**6** (a) as complementary, with informal institutions reinforcing formal institutions to achieve shared goals; (b) as mutually accommodating with informal institutions diverging from formal institutions without necessarily undermining them – not violating the letter of the law even if violating the spirit; (c) as competing when informal institutions not only diverge from formal ones, but also undermine them; (d) as substituting, when informal institutions fill in for absent of ineffective formal institutions, by doing what the latter should have been doing – for instance when non-state actors provide public goods, including health, education, justice and security in the place of an absent or under-achieving state.

[7] Voir la note d'analyse présentée séparément.

In order to consult the lively presentation with a focus on each slide, please click on the following link and then click on the "autoplay Button at the right bottom of the page:

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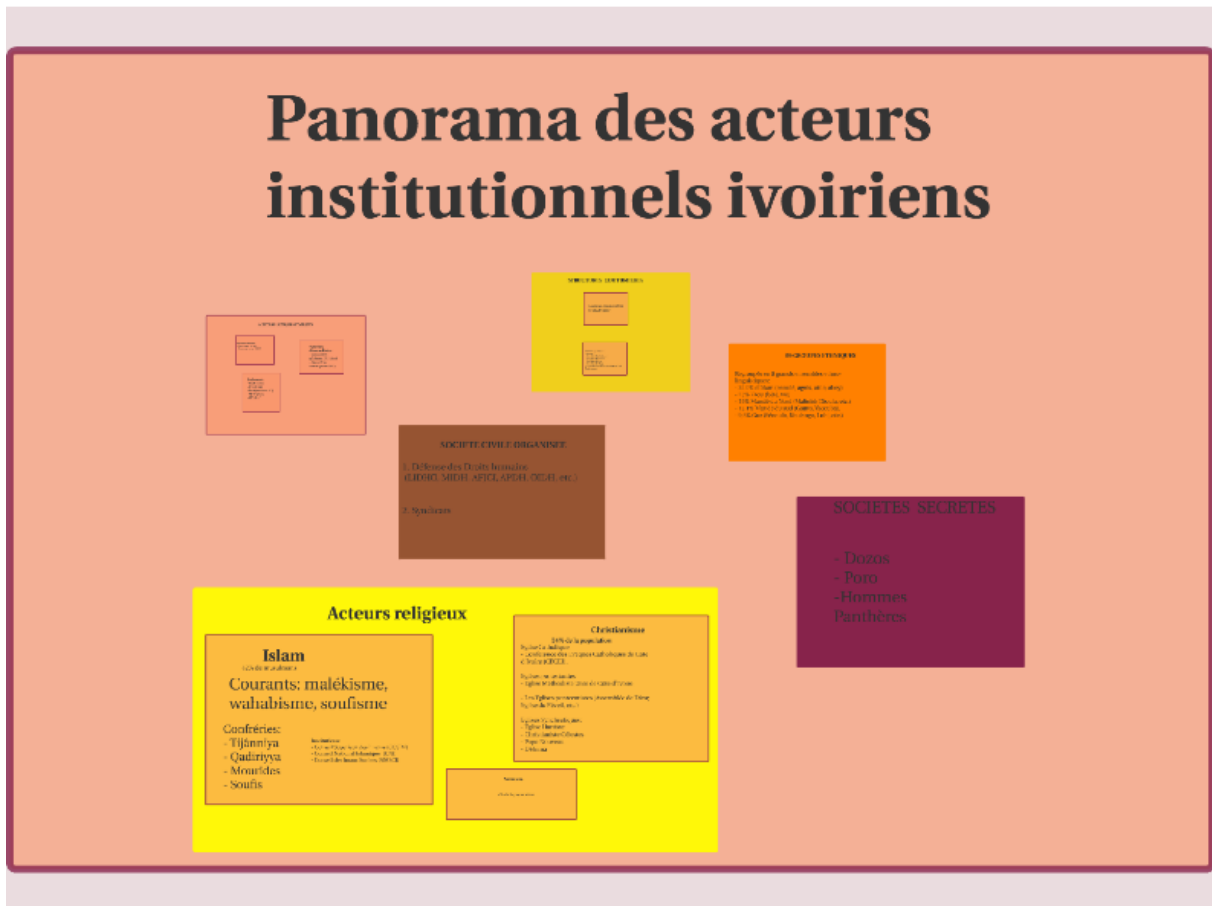
Which format? ASA products

The ASA disseminates its mapping and textual analysis via **different delivery media**:

- **Brief analytical notes, transmitted in French and English** at a **weekly rate by email and social networks,** as well as posted on the **ASA website**;
- **Tailored expertise** (case studies) on the **societal and cultural dynamics of Today's Africa**;
- **Training via distance learning** (e-learning resources, video medium, Tele-briefings via Visio-conference or via Skype; Webinars) or **in situ training course**s.

Who? The experts

The **ASA**, emanating from the **ASSN recognized for the quality of its African experts** organized in a network, **builds on the expertise of African anthropologists and sociologists** who are **continuously on the field.**

Mastering not only the institutional architecture, but also habits and customs and local languages of their respective countries, these experts come from:
- **The administration;**
- **Universities;**
- **Research Centers.**

ASA's professionalism and credibility stems from the **in-depth and detailed knowledge its experts have of Africa**. Those experts reside in the country examined or are located close to it.

Which objectives (outcomes)?

Based on indicators very often overlooked, but that are brought to light, the ASA's pursued objectives are threefold:
- **Improve with new parameters the monitoring measures, early warning systems, crisis prevention and conflict resolution;**
- **Support in formulating and implementing security and development policies based on more advanced knowledge of local African realities;**
- **Put decision-makers in touch with a new community of African experts;**

Under which conditions? Ethic considerations

The **ASA think tank's vision** is, the one **already promoted by the ASSN**, **a democratically governed Africa, to the benefit of its people, transparently and responsibly managed, with a view to ensuring the promotion of human security.**

The values upheld by the ASA as by the ASSN are that of **integrity, diversity, inclusivity and objectivity**.

It is important to underline that:
- The **ASA's approach excludes any idealization of the informal domain[8] While presenting systematically all the stakeholders, standards, and network influencing** the formal and informal institutions of a given State, the ASA's analysis **assesses not only their operational readiness but also their relevance in terms of human rights and the satisfaction of the security and development needs of the African people**;
- The ASA's approach does **not consist in presenting institutions, African societies and cultures stuck in their ethnographic specificities, but instead emphasizes not only current developments but also traditions in which they are rooted**;
- The distinction between formal and informal could be difficult to establish in practice, since in Africa, **stakeholders, standards, and networks in each domain may be interlinked**. The ASA's approach **aims at presenting a schematic vision – but not simplistic, of the configuration of the formal and informal domains**. **Long format documents** (5 to 6 page-summary reports) aim precisely at **getting into the details of the complexity of African sociological environments**./.

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[8] We do not assume a priori that traditional, customary or informal institutions work better for the citizens of African States that the state delivered security. For as Meagher has cogently argued, the rush to embrace the "traditional" obscures the potentially regressive and violent features of governance beyond the margins of the state" (See Meagher, K., 2012. 'The Strength of Weak States? Non-State Security Forces and Hybrid Governance in Africa'. *Development and Change* 43(5), 1073–1101).

The seven expertise Poles of the ASA

Seven expertise poles to analyze the stakeholders, networks and standards that affect the security and development of the African continent

The ASA **analyzes non-state stakeholders, non-official networks, and non-codified standards, whose influence compete or on the contrary complete the intervention scope of State institutions or legal frameworks** through the following **7 expertise poles**:
- Pole 1: **Overview by country;**
- Pole 2: **Traditional authorities, community membership and social solidarity / exclusions**;
- Pole 3: **Religions and religious networks**;
- Pole 4: **Gender**;
- Pole 5: **Informal Security and Justice**;
- Pole 6: **Social changes and emerging stakeholders**;
- Pole 7: **Africa and international networks.**

Pole1: Overview by country

Initially focused on countries from West and East Africa, and of the Sahelian region, this expertise pole proposes for each country of the region:
- ➢ **A map of stakeholders: traditionally powerful stakeholders and emerging stakeholders;**
- ➢ **A map of networks: traditional networks and emerging networks;**
- ➢ **A map of standards: traditional standards and emerging standards**

(Ex: see institutional mappings of Cote d'Ivoire above)

Pole 2: Traditional authorities, community membership and social solidarities / exclusions

This expertise pole highlights the central role always carried out by traditional and customary authorities as well as the importance that bear nowadays again certain community memberships as well as certain solidarities or exclusion principles. The followings are among the themes covered:

- ➢ **Traditional and customary authorities**
  - ✓ Traditional Chieftainship
  - ✓ The African kingdoms
    - ▪ The Bamoun kingdom (Cameroun)
    - ▪ The Mogho Naba, king of the Mossi (Burkina Faso)
    - ▪ The Kano Emirate in Nigeria
  - ✓ Secret and initiatory societies
    - ▪ The Poro
    - ▪ The Sande / Bondo
  - ✓ Verbal references
    - ▪ The Korougan Fouga charter
    - ▪ The Soundiata Corpus

- ➢ **Community membership[9]**

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[9] For each of the communities listed above, the following criteria will be set forward by the institutional mapping (computer graphics and the analysis sheet): Language, History, Hierarchies and social organization; Religious practices, Intercommunity relationship; migration and Diaspora; Economic resources and practices (agriculture, livestock, commerce, donations, trade, non circulation of certain goods, solidarities (funding, social coverage, information dissemination, promises in the Hereafter), interactions with the communities (collaboration versus conflicts), social prescriptions, Gender-related, Age related, contemporary social changes.

- ✓ The castes systems
  - ▪ The contemporary status of the "Griots" in Guinea Conakry
  - ▪ The Samory Touré descendants in West Africa
  - ▪ Geer, Neeno, Jam in the Wolof society (Senegal)
  - ▪ Social hierarchies and the configuration of the Bamako neighborhoods
  - ▪ The Gando of Benin
- ✓ The Mandingo/Malinké community
- ✓ The Fulani community
- ✓ The Sahel communities
  - ▪ The Touaregs
  - ▪ The Songhai
  - ▪ The Kounta Arabs
  - ▪ The descendants of Maures slaves: the haratines
- ✓ The communities of the Chad lake basin
  - ▪ Lamido deRey Bouba
  - ▪ The Kanuris
- ✓ The regional balance policy in Cameroun
- ✓ The freemasonry in West Africa

➢ **Social solidarities and exclusions**
  - ✓ White Africa and black Africa
    - ▪ Relationship between the Arab-Berber population and negro-Africans (Sahel region; Mauritania; Northern Mali)
    - ▪ The anti-slavery movements in Mauritania (IRA and FPC)
  - ✓ Atlantic Africa and Guinean Africa
  - ✓ Herders and farmers
  - ✓ The albinos
  - ✓ The role of the elderly
  - ✓ Family solidarity and obligations
  - ✓ Witchcraft and politics

Pole 4: Religions and religious networks in Africa

This expertise pole highlights the diversity of religious stakeholders, the intertwining of their networks and the entanglement of their standards' systems within different African countries. Four religious universes will be particularly highlighted:

➢ **Islam in Africa**
  - ✓ The Hanbalism
  - ✓ The Malekism
  - ✓ The Sufis Islam in Africa
  - ✓ The Mouride brotherhood
  - ✓ The Tidiane brotherhood

➢ **Christianity in Africa**
  - ✓ The evangelist communities
    - ▪ The revivalist churches
  - ✓ The Catholicism on the African continent
    - ▪ The influence of the Bishops' conference
    - ▪ The return of the catholic religion to the Sahel through the sub-Saharan migrants

➢ **The place of animism**
  - ✓ The Nyabingi

➢ **Buddhism in Africa**

Pole 4: Gender

Far away from being considered as universally valuable, the principles upon which lays the policy of promoting gender and the male/female equality comes often to oppose against the gender concepts anchored into tradition or in particular socio-cultural contexts. Themes addressed by this pole include:
- Homosexual communities
- Inheritance and women's rights (succession)
- Matrilineal societies
- Intra-castes marriage
- Divorce
- Widowhood rites
- Honor, chastity and shame

Pole 5: Informal security and justice

The "Informal Security and Justice" expertise pole highlights the stakeholders, the networks and the standards whose influence on the security sector is barely taken into account. The followings themes are among the first to be addressed:

➢ **Traditional defense and citizen groups**
  ✓ The Dozos hunters in Cote d'Ivoire
  ✓ The Kamajors in Sierra Leone and in the Mano River region
  ✓ The Self-defense citizen groups in Mali (The Gandakoy militias)
  ✓ The O'odua People's Congress (OPC) in Nigeria
  ✓ The Civilian Joint Task Force in Nigeria
  ✓ The Hisbah Groups
  ✓ The Sangsungu in Tanzania

➢ **Criminal networks**
  ✓ The criminalization of the caravan routes
  ✓ The drug trade networks in the Indian Ocean
  ✓ The cigarette smuggling networks
  ✓ The vehicle traffic networks
  ✓ The trafficking in Person networks

➢ **Maritime Security**
  ✓ The Guinea Gulf Pirates sociology

➢ **Customary Justice**
  ✓ The Palava Hut in Liberia
  ✓ The dinas and Fonkatany (Fokonolanas) in Madagascar
  ✓ The cadis in Mali
  ✓ The "vestibule" justice
  ✓ The paternalistic justice mechanism

➢ **Cyber-criminality in Africa**

➢ **Funding security at the community level**
  o The 2015 Kenya conference on entrepreneurship ;

Pole 6: Social changes and emerging stakeholders

This expertise pole focuses on the ongoing development and change in African societies. A particuar focus will be put on youth:

➢ **The analysis of political speeches carried on in local languages** (Bamanankan; Wolof, …) …..

➢ **The citizens movements:**
  ✓ "Y'en a mare" (Senegal)
  ✓ Le balai citoyen (Burkina Faso)

➢ **The media overview (for each country)**
  ✓ The radios
  ✓ The written press
  ✓ The information websites
  ✓ The new media and social African networks

➢ **The influence of popular cultures**
  ✓ The rap groups (PBS in Senegal, the "gooney Waly yé")
  ✓ The "coupé décalé" movement in Cote d'Ivoire
  ✓ The photo-novellas
  ✓ The Nigerian cinema (Nollywood)
  ✓
➢ **The African start-up**
➢ **The South-South cooperation**
➢ **The ghost-children (without birth certificate)**
➢ **The African motorcycle-taxis**
➢ **The migrant associations**
➢ **The initiatory ritual mobilizing the youth**
➢ **The new forms of solidarity**
➢ **The economic resourcefulness in popular neighborhoods**
➢ **The African intellectuals (who do not speak European languages)**
➢ **The informal urban sector**
➢ **The informal rural world**
➢ **The middle classes**
➢ **The Malian school system (as compared to the traditional school system)**

Pole 7: The internationalization of Africa from bottom up

Many analyses address the role of Africa within the global geopolitics and bilateral relations of countries from the continent towards the international stakeholders (United States, China, Europe, India, …). Very little attention, if any however, is given to the role played in Africa by nationals from these countries or to the networks linking them to the African continent:

➢ **The non-African Diaspora on the continent:**
  ✓ The Lebanese community
  ✓ The Indian community
  ✓ The Israeli community
  ✓ The Chinese community
  ✓ The Turkish community

➢ **The Saharan traders networks towards China and Dubai.**