

**Introduction:**  
**The Role of Social Science in Conflict**  
**Analysis:**  
**The crisis of the contemporary paradigms**  
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In their attempt to contribute to the understanding of political, economic and general development processes and their consequences on society, social scientists have been involved in advising policy makers and planners on how to solve some social or social-related problems and the potential conflicts which may arise from them. Not only approaching policy makers and administrators, social scientists have also been called upon to solve riddles or look into the failings of others. As such they have often indulged in the study of problems which have little or no direct association with social structures, linguistics, ideology or organizational patterns, yet with dire social implications for society. Social scientists took on such challenges because as Gouldner (1970) asserts, 'the government expected the social sciences to help solve ramifying practical problems. In particular, it is expected that the social sciences will help administrators to design and operate national policies, welfare apparatus, urban settlements, and even industrial establishments'. However, the use of certain social theory also underlines certain interests within the community of social science practitioners who are either part of the state establishment or a negation to it. Certainly, the social scientists who operated within the confines of the welfare state and put the knowledge they have accumulated at its disposal have something to do with the furthering the state interests.

The involvement of social scientists in politics is more visible in the developing world where some of the educated elite assumed greater responsibility towards society and declared themselves guardians of some concrete societal interests such as creating political organizations, pressure groups for better services, or lobbying for laws to be enacted or repealed. Others have indulged in consciousness raising and restlessly mobilizing society to reject authoritarianism and repression in all forms. Some also took a radical stand (Ake 1979; Kruijer 1987; Chilcote 1991) and according to Kruijer (1987: 60), claim that, "as liberation scientists they carry out their investigations in close contact with leaders of political parties and similar action groups, and work with the active involvement of the oppressed. In so doing, they not only add to the knowledge of the oppressed, but, more important, encourage them to start gathering data by

themselves and interpret them". The assumption here is that social scientists are deliberately involved in liberation by taking side with the oppressed in the struggle over power and resources. In this sense, social scientists are overt party to social conflicts by attempting to transform social theory into an ideology capable of empowering the oppressed to improve their lot.

Some social scientists have embraced the comfort of sitting on the fence criticizing any and every policy without offering alternatives. We cannot also underestimate the role of those social scientists who became "philosophers of the state", justifying policies or elaborating their ideological implications. Since those social scientists who worked within the confines of the state often find themselves in direct confrontation with those who opposed its policies, perceptions of social conflicts can be transformed to conflicts between the social scientists themselves. The relationship between social science and conflict in society cannot be made more obvious.

Social sciences have devoted special attention to the study of conflict to the extent that social scientists have often been accused of dealing with controversial issues which are susceptible of perpetuating conflict. However, the domain of study of social science is society to which the social scientist is directly or indirectly related. Within such a wider spectrum of issues, the study of conflict, social problems, stratification, antagonisms and contradictions, among other things, are some of the extensively researched subjects in social science.

The relationship between social scientists and the state apparatus is of particular relevance to this collection. It is important since in the disposition of knowledge, social sciences have responded to societal demands which at times contradict state policies. Hence social sciences have played an important role in conceptualizing the contradiction between state and civil society, and this has occurred in all domains of social life from production and political life to the environment. Such a role has been played with in varying degrees of success both in the industrially advanced as well as the developing countries. This theme features very strongly in the chapters presented in this volume, especially those by Hurskainen, Doornbos and Terhal, Pankhurst, O'Brien, and Wood.

Social scientists in the South have also been involved in designing and at times implementing development projects, while others are involved in areas that might seem to some remote from the domain of social science (i.e. electrification, irrigation or construction projects). However, the involvement of social scientists in development projects has not been easy simply because their proposals and policy recommendations have often fallen in deaf ears, out-rightly rejected or lied dormant in the files of the policy makers. Within this volume, reference can also be made to Jerabkova, Doornbos and Terhal and Kolawole who argue along the same lines.

However, indifference by the state to such "objective" research findings, could be attributed according to Sayer (1992: 15) to the fact that, social science knowledge is primarily propositional or referential, rather than practical, and this should immediately provide some clues as to why it seems unable, except very

indirectly, to help us decide how to live. No doubt the common fear of the alleged danger of "value intrusion" in social science also inhibits its practical application. After all, social scientists are involved in the process of the production of ideas and knowledge and do lack any authority other than the moral and ethical responsibility towards society. And because of that those social scientists who felt politically alienated and unable to change social reality or make their ideas responded to through the written or spoken word, many social scientists have become ideologists or activists, not only preaching ideas of the political society they contrive to create, but adhering to repugnant forms of radicalism, which at times parts with objectivity. An analogy between the military who seize power accusing the civilians of being impotent in addressing the pressing issues of the nation, and a social scientist who contemplates activism as an alternative to dialogue is revealing.

The variations in which social sciences enter into and are interested in society suggest that the objectivization of reality (with its multidimensional facets) is as dangerous as its subjectivization, and that in none one can find any notion of a social science devoid of addressing specific social interests. A familiar case is how various levels of social strata are delineated and their role in society justified, condemned or manipulated by social scientists. Furthermore, such roles can be explicated by social scientist to communicate meanings not original to the objectives, interests and pursuits of the wider society. For instance, development may be perceived as an activity targeted to specific groups to the exclusion of others. However, if social development policies are informed by a given ideology, then development as a pursuit presupposes a linkage between social theory and ideology.

The analysis of development and the division of social scientists between advocates of self-reliance and modernization has produced valuable insights into how social science knowledge can be used to advance certain societal interests vis-à-vis others (Young 1982). Hence, development itself became an arena of conflict between competing interests (development agencies, national governments, local population and different production systems). Conflicts of perceptions of development between development agents and national governments are influenced by internal determinants within which the donor and recipient countries operate (Närman has begun to scratch the surface of this problem in a chapter in this volume). At the national level, development projects have often not been conducive to the interests of the local populations (i.e. interested in fragmented and non-integrated production systems, agriculture, pastoralists, industry as has been explained by Wood, Joy and Hurskainen in this volume) but they also involve priorities, the pursuance of which may bring to open conflicts between production systems, or to conflict with the local value systems on which it encroached. One of the issues which we will be dealing with in this conference is whether social science has played any meaningful role in understanding and solving some of these conflicts.

## 1. SOCIAL SCIENCE IDEOLOGY AND CONFLICT

By virtue of their social theory, social scientists are explicitly or implicitly interested in ideology despite their awareness of the contradiction between "science" and ideology per se. To that effect, all political actions to defend or reject policies, laws and institutions, which affect society, according to Thomson (1990: 79), are ultimately oriented towards the preservation, reform, destruction or reconstruction of the social order. Social theory is also said to be linked to a specific form of political practice (Bernstein 1976; Fay 1975). It follows that all political actions are necessarily guided by an ideological system of belief, so are the social scientists who advocate them.

Contemporary social scientists are quick to reveal that there is a considerable amount of symbolic violence (Thomson 1990) in society. The power of symbolic violence may be described as devastating to social order as physical violence. Christian, Islamic and Jewish fundamentalism or ethno-centricism are all guided by ideologies which express their quest for survival in terms of the need for the elimination of their opponents. Prejudice often informed (or misinformed) by symbolic violence and long held enemy images. Rather than adhering to the crude meaning of conflict in the form of the physical elimination of political or other opponents, symbolic violence presumes that the death of the ideals held by others would lead to the flourishing of theirs. Knowledge can therefore be described as a house of ideas and values which maintain power and justify it either by material or symbolic representation.

The writings of social scientists about conflicts purport that they cannot be read in isolation from the object of their study or the objective reality which they may subjectively attempt to understand or explicate to others. El-Affendi and Hurskainen address the issue of prejudice both in the foundations of the concept of Western knowledge and its response to other cultures and societies. Social scientists at least have some common or contradictory interests in their interpretation of what may be labelled as objective reality. However, when the interests of the social scientist are in direct contradiction with those of his object there are always ideological, material or non-material values which in one way or another influence that position. For instance, in a paper on the methodological approaches to nationalism and nation-building in the Sudan, it is found that there is a direct ideological and ethnic alliance between the social scientists and the interpretations which they offered as to the essence of the problem of the Southern Sudan. Each social scientist has put the blame squarely on the "others" and a "we" versus "them" pattern has emerged.

Instances of congruence between the social scientists' ideological orientations raise the question of their objectivity. To what extent can social scientists claim to be advocating "value free" social science? The simplistic answer to this question is that social scientists are only human beings and as such they have their likes, dislikes, interests, beliefs and ideological orientations. And as part of the

wider society, social scientists are prone to become overt or covert partners in conflicts which they assume they are much more capable than others to solve. Social scientists as partners to conflicts can play a better role in solving them only when they are able to command a certain degree of tolerance, magnanimity and compromise. But, are social scientists really more compromising than others, (e.g. politicians) or are they always guided by subjectivity?

The anticipated "end of ideology" (Waxman 1968) has ushered new responses which social scientists have barely been able to accommodate or readjust themselves to accept. The move away from politically induced societal transformations to the art of tampering with "limited solutions" has brought to question the validity and usefulness of the so-called grand theories. However, some social scientists appear to be poorly prepared to live in a world in which the role of grand theories and grand confrontations have been minimized. And before social scientists came out of the "shock of the collapse of their ideological basis", they were brutally confronted by the fragmentation of some grand structures into dysfunctional sub-systems that do not fit into the framework of the world that we had experienced and participated in its making and hence re-making.

Social science has been forced by the recent developments in the global political structures to retreat to paradigms which it had long ago rejected and pretentiously described as piece-meal solutions short of satisfying the need for structural change. One may be tempted to assert that such notions as "totalization" and "radical change" have become less appreciated by many social scientists, (e.g. O'Brien in this volume), specially those who considered the failure or success of their "schools of political thought" a cause for personal concern or personal triumph.

If developed further, this line of thinking should contribute to the understanding that social sciences are means of conflict analysis as well as an important party to conflict. In that regard, social sciences are means, mediators and instigators of conflict. The essence of conflict is one between ideas, values and knowledge systems on the one hand, and their symbolic and material expression in society on the other. Hence, the existence of such notions as conflicting interests underpins a formidable association between social scientists and the ideological strands which they strive to propagate.

## 2. KNOWLEDGE, CONFLICT AND SOCIAL INTERESTS

As a human activity, knowledge is developed to meet at least two ends: first, to transform, modify, move or manipulate any part of "pure" nature or nature that has already been extensively modified. Second, knowledge is communicative interaction between people, and it involves the sharing and transmission of meaning (Sayer 1992: 17). What is particular about social science knowledge is that it is about society and that social scientists relate, in some way, to the society which constitutes the object of their investigation. Social sciences advance

judgements, which means that they not only suggest solutions to conflicts but that the solutions suggested become part of the theoretical or ideological commitments of the social scientists. Problem analysis and its respective constituents permeate and simultaneously affect the hierarchy of social interests. Furthermore, it defines the context within which social science knowledge and its application affects the segments of any given society.

In the context of "knowledge and human interest", Habermas (1972) warns that the logical methodological rules for the conduct of the various sciences are linked to an interest structure which is rooted in the self-formative process of the human species, and which prejudices both the possible objects of scientific analysis and the possible meaning of the validity of scientific statements. An interesting aspect of Habermas' analysis is that the structure of interests which influence the production of knowledge and the limitations which accompany that (subjectivity or helplessness) are common to science, whether social or natural. If the production of "scientific" knowledge is bound to be manipulated by a structure of interests as Habermas proposes, then we can establish a linkage between the "scientist's" interest and that of the object of inquiry (i.e. society or nature).

According to Ake (1977), the structure of interests of social science knowledge in the independent African states has produced value-loaded and foreign social science. Those who advocate this point of view claim that the aims of Western social science are contradictory to social interests because: first, they are unable to grasp the African reality and all what they attempted is to produce structural parallels derived from the experience of Western societies. And second, they entrench foreign cultures and ideologies that have failed miserably to tackle the pressing problems of underdevelopment and poverty (Temu 1975: 20). What prompted these negative attributes of social sciences is that, during the 1960s and 1970s, some African social scientists suspected that there was an emerging academic imperialism in which research teams from the East and the West used to employ locals for semi-skilled activities while the credit goes to foreign professors and researchers. Many local social scientists perceived such type of research activity as counter-productive, not useful for the process of transformation in which these countries had just embarked. They were seemingly not dealing with the pressing needs of the African countries or of their people. A conflict of interest between the South and the North can also be seen in terms of conflict of interest between social scientists and the type of social science activity in which they are engaged.

Contradictory interests between the aims of social sciences, their advocacy and those whose interests they serve, pose the question of relevance. Dependencia and other rejectionist tendencies gave way to a short lived emphasis on the indigenization of development as a direct rejection to what was referred to a "academic imperialism" (Hettne 1990: 90-9). However, the indigenization phase did not survive modern (Western) social sciences and the structure of interests between the modernization school on the one hand, and dependency and the "progressives" on the other. The modernization schools (both pre-capitalist and

neo-Marxist) have survived only because of their connections with external financial resources on which they depended to establish research institutions and to finance research priorities. The ideological orientations of the African states were not conducive to any indigenization project. Afro-Marxists, social democrats, moderate socialists and agrarian socialists have dominated the continent with strong emphasis on the role of academic and research institutions in development. Social scientists were divided between one-party system supporters and critics. Conflict analysis of society, relations of production, modes of production, class ideology and the like were in plenty. The study of conflict within these parameters became the dominant character of the production of social science knowledge which was closely associated with the dominant state ideology.

During the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, social scientists have shifted emphasis once more from dependencia to two extremes: the first dealt with conventional local (mostly project-oriented) level analysis and the second took interest in regional and global issues ranging from the socio-political impacts of structural adjustment to global environmental questions. The political economy approach has been confined to national/local movements and their transformation into vehicles for democracy and economic liberalization. A great deal of social science research has been conducted under the influence of international development agencies, global economic and political structures (IMF/World Bank, UN agencies, EEC/USA political alliance etc.) leading to the theory of the globalization of development (Chazan et al., 1988; Hettne 1990).

Social sciences in the South are once again preoccupied by attempts to distinguish between a New World Order (NWO) and the growing nationalist sentiments inside and outside Europe, with serious debates about a second liberation to bring about democratization and do away with authoritarianism (Healy and Robinson 1992). These trends can be delineated as project-based interests on local and national structures within the newly emerging supraregional/global impact analysis. One cannot fail to concur with El-Affendi, in this volume, that these manifestations are not more than neo-forms of imperialism under the pretext of a "New World Order" and the "International Community".

The dilemma of these new orientations in international politics is that they are forced on social scientists by circumstances that social science theories failed to anticipate and were less prepared to accommodate. There is no gain-saying that social scientists are still in the process of finding new positions which can help them to operate in the world less prone to ideological confrontations or conflicts. These used to enrich their theoretical strands, but they have diminished, if not eliminated, following the end of the cold war and the suicidal death of communism. However, an interesting feature of the new trends in social science is the growing recognition that theory does not reflect reality and that the quest for structural change is not a priority in the minds of the policy makers. This contention should certainly give way to micro-level interventions incapable of

trickling-down long-term development processes to various levels of the structure. Such developments may create more conflicts in the societies of the South.

### 3. THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON SOCIAL REALITY

Two dire consequences of the globalization of development and of the triumph of capitalism over "socialism" can be discerned: first, development began to take twin features of dependence (or interdependence as some prefer to call it). Second, the South became more dependent, because it could no longer play one political opponent against the other (capitalism versus socialism) and because many poor states are no longer in control of their resources due to mounting debt, poverty and underdevelopment. Development assistance has been made closely linked to democratization, the observance of human rights (the stick and carrot theory) and obedience to the USA and its Western allies. The role of the internal forces operating within the national context can hardly be defined since development is ultimately linked to global structures, which in their part demand greater economic liberalization policies to ensure the movement of capital and profits between countries and continents. A donor or foreign-driven political or economic change can hardly be called sustainable.

The question which follows is: what is the prospect of the internal forces of production to become "vanguards" of development - only to use a bad word? The emergence of the New World Order poses some serious questions to social scientists and challenges the positions of those who resist state hegemony and those who perpetuated it. Interdependence or dependence on global structures to sustain the governing national political forces (through conditionality) would only make such forces look outward than inward for political legitimacy. Social scientists are once more challenged with a situation in which external (to accept democratization and economic liberalization) is expected to yield sustainable political development in the South, the ex-Eastern bloc countries and the Soviet Union. One of the crises of the contemporary paradigms in social science is that they have not attempted to critically assess the validity of the assumptions put forward by the neoclassical theorists and their relevance to the emerging democracies world-wide. Social science agenda, it seems, has been drawn by an academic bureaucracy responsible to policy makers in defining and prejudging the social scientists' research interests.

If social scientists are to be guided by what Habermas (1972) called structure of interests, are we then witnessing an era of contradictions between blatant nationalism in the North wrapped under the cover of international legitimacy? How relevant is the social science heritage which has been accumulated during the cold war period and what about all these various theories of accumulation, modes of production, dependence and various forms of structuralism, liberalism etc.?



Therefore, it is urgent to pose a critique of the recent paradigms as the interests of the influential sectors of social sciences began to live a blind eye to conflicts which might have been perpetuated by the structure of interests within the global and inward looking politico-economic structures. Ironically, social scientists can no longer afford to reduce conflict to class struggle or keep silent about the effect of the conflicts between production systems on heterogeneous users who are in some instances bound by ethnic rather than class interests. If genuine attempts to change the socio-political and economic structures in the South through Western models of development have failed, conflicts between classes as a means of development in the conventional way should be reduced to conflicts between production systems. The main forces in this conflict are based on a division of labour between the South and the North on the one hand, and within the South on the other. Would the South be able to break out of the vicious circle imposed on it, not by its internal processes of class antagonism, but by the present international division of labour which is nurtured by global and powerful regional structures in the North, which struggle to maintain the *status quo*.

The main argument can be reduced to the contention that production systems are representations of social as well as political interests and their examination helps understanding possible contradictions in society (whether local, national, regional or global) and how they operate to promote specific production systems in isolation from the contemporary paradigms of social science. Three issues come to the forefront of this critique. First, contemporary social science paradigms have retreated from critical policy analysis and theory to the crude manipulation of reality. In the process, the bulk of social sciences production is often motivated by programmes designed for short-term decision-making purposes than by basic research. The solutions which social scientists can offer in these situations are nothing but piece-meal. They may even result in greater problems than those which they set out to resolve. Second, social theory is still largely informed by the methods of social inquiry advanced by the founding fathers of social science (Gouldner 1977; Giddens 1987). No new spectacular break-throughs have been made in theory while theory itself became nothing more than elaborations of old paradigms or combinations of disciplines - not even viable interdisciplinary approaches. Third, social sciences have for so long been kept alive by East-West confrontation. The gradual elimination of this confrontation by political means has produced a great deal of arrogance in some sectors of the production of knowledge. The retreat to functionalism in Western sociology and social sciences in general is also a sign of a deeper crisis than anticipated (Gouldner 1970). Critical theory and the coming together of various forms of alliances between psychoanalysis, neo-realism, postmodernism and structuralism might not offer adequate answers to some of the pressing questions posed by a nation-state in crisis, (e.g. O'Brien in this volume), a New World Order uncertain of its destiny and a South without a development theory to guide it through the complexity of the new fragmented development paradigms.

However, social sciences will continue to play an important role in conflict analysis. First, by virtue of the fact that social scientists are part of society and therefore part of these conflicts. Second, since little "development" has been achieved in the South, despite massive development assistance, the social dimension of development will continue to pose serious challenge to policy makers and planners. The contemporary paradigms in developmental thinking offer project-based interventions which might frustrate those who opt for quick results. Furthermore, it might jeopardize the imposed conditionality in the form of insistence by the West on democratization and painstaking economic liberalization policies in the South and the former East European nations. The problem with any excessive external imposition of conditionality is that it may produce a deformed development praxis capable of reforming political structures, but incapable of reaching down to people, the subject and object of development.

#### 4. ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF THIS VOLUME

Not all the papers presented in this volume agree with the notions which I have addressed above. However, most of the major issues which we set out to ourselves to discuss have been introduced, but not fully exhausted. There are still some gaps to be filled, now that this area of research has been revisited after some silence. It is hoped that social scientists are now struggling with how to respond to the challenges posed by contemporary changes which caught them off-guard. The diversity of approaches used in this volume cannot possibly be subsumed under one theoretical perspective. We therefore offer a number of approaches which range from theoretical postulates to empirical case studies.

In the context of the problems confronting the "New World Order", El-Affendi, a Muslim thinker, argues that, in the era of the lack of dissident reaffirmation of its supremacy, capitalism has reinforced an unruly rejection of counter-arguments and a crude denial of alternative possibilities even if these possibilities can offer viable prescriptions for the ills of society. El-Affendi's critique of social sciences from an Islamic perspective is further developed into a critique of the foundations of the "New World Order" and its prejudices against Islam and Muslims. According to the author of this chapter, social sciences have been gravely abused by the Western regimes to justify their injustices against Muslims and taking on Islam as a replacement of the dejected communist enemy image. El-Affendi asserts that social scientists are increasingly drawn into the absurd business of justifying the foundations of the present status-quo which is a sign of the preposterous crisis of Western social sciences. The Islamic perspective also poses a direct critique to Western social sciences for embarking on helping to cure the hopes raised by the demise of communism and the resurgence of neo-colonialism, rather than the misery created by the injustices inflicted upon Muslims by their adversaries.

Hurskainen questions the conventional ways in which knowledge is defined and argues that knowledge is value-loaded and at times encompasses prejudices against other systems of knowledge. The very fact that knowledge is hierarchically juxtaposed to discern certain values or consciously labelled into rational versus irrational, scientific versus non-scientific or modern versus traditional also carries on board prejudicial meanings which often undermine the possibility of making use of other systems of knowledge which are equally effective and relevant within the context of their production. In this sense, even though at a different level of analysis and hence abstraction, Hurskainen concurs with Mohamed Salih that even the so-called objective and rational knowledge can be subjectively used to realize given hideous ends. The state and its political orientations which are geared towards modernization, the officially recognized knowledge is often been used to the disadvantage of the civil society, its reality and respective needs. The author's experience in Tanzania offers an ample evidence as to why the official knowledge often fails to respond to people's aspirations and self-perceived needs. In this sense social sciences have little if any role to play in situations where the dominant structure of interests, including the social scientists (together with the policy makers), contradicts that of the local populations.

A case study of "Operation Flood" gives further evidence to most of the contributions which dealt with the competing political interests with which the social scientists deal in development situations. Doornbos and Terhal have meticulously demonstrated that the findings of social science are not always welcome, specially when they reveal shortcomings of the administrators and policy makers or propose alternative policies which might challenge the establishment. The situation lends itself to the questioning of the quest for independent research while its findings are not accepted for consideration internal or external to the organization which ordered it. The political dimension of research policy and research orientation therefore is one of significant implications for the value accredited to its findings. At least three interrelated issues can be deduced from this interesting case. First, research findings can be dubbed "problem raising" when they produce counter claims which might point out to ill conceived or unmet objectives, expectations or targets. Second, social scientists in such cases find themselves under extreme pressures pertaining to competing expectations in their findings. Third, the structure of interests which features prominently in this theme, creates certain limitations on the researchers and at times brings the social scientists into direct confrontation with administrators and policy makers. In all three cases, social scientists must have by now recognized that there is no value free social science which does not mean that they should retreat to their ivory towers and let the resource-poor and pastoralists become victims to national or supra-national interest groups.

The legacy of the collapse of the Soviet Empire has its ramifications not only in the political domain, but also in the manner in which ecological problems resulting from industrialization have besieged its former partners. In a chapter on

whether the case of the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros project for hydro-electric power generation is a case for politicians or engineers, Jerabkova has demonstrated the working of several mitigating circumstances and changing perceptions between economists and engineers on the one hand, and ecologists and the civil society at large on the other. After the division of Czechoslovakia, Gabčíkovo Nagymaros project became a symbol for the demonstration of will vis-à-vis its not a too distant past. The role of social scientists in this case became more urgent with the opening up of the society and the democratic agenda which it still has to strive to accomplish. The contradictions between state and civil society in this case demonstrates that the social scientists can better leave an impact on conflict analysis under "soft states" than under totalitarian states.

Bigombe outlines the basic features of Uganda ethnic diversity, its struggle against the colonialists, resistance of repression by authoritarian governors in the past and its present struggle for creating a politically viable and stable political fabric in a society overwhelmed by civil war for the greater part of post-independence Uganda. Three important aspects deserve to be highlighted. First, the role of women in post civil war Uganda, both in the peace making process and reconstruction. Second, the telling fact that reconstruction is more difficult than destruction as the societies have to struggle to maintain the *status quo* let alone advancing development. Third, it appears from this case that social sciences are always invited (or invite themselves) to write *post mortem* of conflicts rather than proposing means and ways of solving them. The division of social scientists along the battle-lines has the effect that at least part of the proposals of the experts may at times increase the propensity for conflicts rather than contribute to their resolution. The authoress contends that social scientists have to be able to influence policy makers by offering workable and relevant solutions to the problems which confront Africa today. Social scientists are consciously or unconsciously party to social conflicts and caution must be exerted before taking up their advice at its face value.

The modernist view which presupposes that culture declines under the influence of an advancing scientific rationality has been criticized by Jay O'Brien who argues that the political ideology which gave way to this school of thought is paternalistic in two ways. First, it advocates the concept of coming together of a universalist modernist culture only to justify its dominance and purports its superiority over other cultural traditions. By implication this ideology of hegemony transcends the collective individuals to incorporate such issues as nationalism, consumerism and the valuation of "other" cultural values. For instance, concepts such as nation-state have been imposed on "other" societies with the presumption that it encompasses structural parallels with the modernist notions advanced through westernization. Second, social sciences within today's fluid cultural boundaries should be able to rethink their concepts to accommodate the changes induced by colonialism and further heralded by imperialism. The ideas developed by O'Brien, using the Sudanese case, offer the possibility of delineating culture and its manifestations (ethnicity, nationalism etc.) not as a

"body" of radical differences, but as a process circumscribing people's history and its expression in material and non-material values. Hence if imperialism is part of the history of its subjects as well as its objects, then, according to O'Brien, the concept of radical cultural differences (or boundaries) cannot hold much ground in any discussion about their cultural constituents (nations or "ethnics"). In this sense, cultural identification cannot be seen as a static reality, and if it is to comprehend the dynamic of today's world, then ethnicity changes according to changes in society, polity and economy. The case of the actors involved in the war in Southern Sudan illustrates the point while defying the reconstruction of cultural traditions under the name of social scientific knowledge.

A critique of modernization has also been launched by Käkönen who argues that despite the modernist glorification of rationality, there are still some seeming non-scientific notions which in parallel terms equates the present environmental crisis with a punishment for humanity which violated it. Yet the relationship between man and nature through modernization can be seen as a process justifying the subjugation of non-westernized societies. The restructuring of the environment in this wider context of interpretation can also be seen as part of a programme of hegemony which responds less to the needs of those who were used in the past (and even today) to exploit nature for the benefit of the advocates of this "project". The critique of the concept of the "end of history" (also raised by El-Affendi and O'Brien) has now been introduced to examine the relationship between an outcry for development through modernization and sustainable environment. Käkönen then asks a question about on what moral grounds can the restructuring of the environment be unjustified if it means to leave millions of people in the Third World without food. The whole modernization project, unless defined to mean different things from its implicit ideological trends, may further the exploitation of man by man and nature by man which is always the privilege of those whose values define the order of things.

Social sciences can also be used to support or suppress an ethnic cause and may as well create a mythology to justify the role of the dominant ethnic group in the struggle over power and resources. The Ethiopian population census of 1984 could have been used to that effect. Pankhurst has elucidated at least two important points vis-à-vis social scientists' interpretations of ethnicity as a fetishist notion in a seemingly simple but complex political society. The making of ethnic identification is a function of many interrelated factors linking remote societies with global structures. The encapsulation of the "small societies" into the "large" and technologically advanced ones amounts to a conspiracy defining the destiny of the "small" with complete disregard to its cultural heritage. At a higher level abstraction, such ramifications find their way to internal divisions which thrive on chaos under the banner of real or imagined fetishism that masks other political and economic divisions. In the event, even abstract figures such as those of the 1984 census in Ethiopia can be used as pointers to ethnic claims. The Ethiopian case demonstrates also that the retreat from ethnic heterogeneity to the virtue of politicizing ethnicity is a move away from the old regime to a new regime which

is not necessarily superior to these or other notions of development. The dilemma for the social scientists is how to interpret their own identity crisis which is marred with abstract political notions and theories that might neither be sufficiently comprehensive to explain reality or its uses and abuses.

Although social scientists are often called upon to design or evaluate development projects, they are yet to agree on what development really means. Närman offers a brief discourse on the confusion which marred the concept and because of that confusion certain conflicting interests have emerged to delineate the unfortunate fact that the pursuance of development is in conflict with the establishment goals and perceptions as well as the values held high by the recipients. The global reality, the division of labour between the poor and the rich and their varying interests cannot possibly be harmonized in a development model free from conflict of interests and divergent expectations. If social sciences are to play a meaningful role in conflict resolution, they have to redefine their perspectives to be more offensive in analysing the conflicting interests. The ultimate goal of such an offensive social science is to take sides with the poor and the underprivileged. Any programme of action that attempts to avoid this confrontation between the state and civil society is apt to reinforce the present structure of the development process which has so far failed to reach its intended beneficiaries.

On states and conflicts our attention was focused on Uganda. A chapter by Sekitoleko, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Industry and Bigombe, the Minister for the Pacification of the North, depicted their attempts to come to grips with issues pertinent to food security, development as and longterm prospects for political stability. The linkages and environmental draw-backs of agricultural mal-practices are the theme of Sekitoleko's chapter which outlines Uganda Government response to the pressing environmental concerns. The policy makers in this case have to struggle with some issues which are social science in essence in the Ministry of Agriculture which until recently did not pay much attention to the agricultural concerns. In the event, three myths persisted, but are gradually changing: a) the myth that there is plenty to be tapped from the environment, 2) the natural resources are ours and belong to the present generation, as if they do not belong to the future generations and 3) it does not matter how much harm we do to nature as long as our farms are getting bigger and our cattle multiply. These three illusions which grasp a common thinking in the debate between ecology and economy are central issues that require intervention to solve an apparent contradiction between agriculture and environmental protection. At a larger synthesis, the agriculture versus the environment debate is socially-based and can be mitigated only by socioeconomic influences which are outside the domain of natural science. In this sense the role of social science in analysing and explaining the contradictions within production systems and between production systems and the environment is gaining much more ground today than ever before.

The role of social sciences in analysing conflicts between production systems is a theme taken by four contributors to this volume. Ethiopia is revisited by Wood who outlined the conflicts over natural resources between various users. The chapter reveals that there is some form of consistency between ethnic diversity and natural resource use patterns. Wood suggests that ethnic identity can be utilized to enhance the call for an appropriate utilization of resources by restoring local communities' rights to resources. The issue of migration which was discussed by Pankhurst at the national level has been examined by Wood from the viewpoint of local level utilization of resources. This also brings to the light the response of households to state policies which in some instances instigated conflicts by creating external resource management demands.

Gender issues and agricultural transformation in Africa is the subject of Nindi's contribution. He asserts that women must be involved in any attempt to increase agricultural output in Africa. The main argument here is that although the agricultural sector in Africa is mainly operated by women, extension programmes and the main target groups for agricultural development projects aiming at increasing production are men-biased. This bias falls well within what has been termed by Nārman as the contradictions which derailed the modernization approaches and rendered them futile. Changes in the substance rather than the form of agricultural policies ought to bring about much better results if women became part of the decision making process. This according to Nindi is the only way out of the present policies which change form only to maintain a male privileged position.

Agrarian transformation cannot be treated as a technical process in which new crops, irrigation projects and farming technology are introduced without due consideration to people's traditional resource management systems, knowledge and expertise. Kolawole asserts that it is because of the negligence of such an important dimension that irrigation projects in northern Nigeria have suffered conflicts within the agrarian transformation itself, conflicts between various systems of resource management. The author shares with Wood the view that the degradation of the natural resources and the environment in general is partially caused by the diversity of production systems imposed by the state. Unlike the Ethiopian case where the state sought to utilize the southwest for famine victims from other parts of Ethiopia, the Nigerian Government has favoured large scale producers of cash crops.

The importance of interdisciplinary research for agricultural development projects is highlighted by Joy who argues that traditional farming systems are very susceptible to any intrusions by developers. In this respect, the social sciences perspective is sought to be essential in dealing with both macro and micro-contradictions between the modern input delivery system and how they may negatively affect the already existing ecosystems. And because farming systems operate within a wider ecosystem, it is therefore impossible to concentrate on developing one without due consideration of the other structures of the ecosystem. Social sciences can also assist in delineating the various layers which link national

agricultural policies and individual farmers at the village. The decline of outputs and the lack of sustainability, both environmental and in terms of production targets, has been demonstrated in the case offered by Joy as well as in other similar cases. Joy's intervention has much in common with Hurskainen's and Mgale's emphasis on the drawbacks of the biases which define knowledge in terms of modern and traditional. The gender-bias which Nindi raised in his chapter is also raised by Joy in his discussion of issues pertaining to the negligence of women in agricultural development policies.

The impact of development on the social structure and economies of village communities in Tanzania is examined by Mgale who argues that the penetration of the new capital in small villages has undermined rural survival strategies by introducing unsustainable development. The role of the state as an engine of development has been jeopardized by its intolerance to local level initiatives, impeding bureaucratic strings and complete negligence of people's knowledge and experience. The most urgent question raised by the chapter is where were the social scientists when such interventions were undertaken. The lack of a clear social science mandate from the beginning makes it difficult for social scientists to come with alternative policies when the damage has already been done and people's illusions about development have been shattered.

This introductory note attempts to illuminate the role of social sciences in society in general and their role in conflict analysis in particular. Three interrelated issues have been raised: the contribution of social sciences to the understanding of social and political conflicts arising in development situations, the linkage between social science knowledge and social interests, and the role of social sciences in elucidating conflicts between production and resource management systems. Most authors offer a critique of the contemporary paradigms and of the response of social sciences to conflicts, hence linking social sciences and their role in advancing given development ideology or ideologies. The authors have also attempted to elucidate the dilemma of grasping social reality in the present complex reality, changing socio-economic and political circumstances and an increasing globalization of development issues. The question remains whether social sciences are in a position to offer a meaningful alternative to the cold war paradigms which many have not yet managed to supersede.



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