



THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
And
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
In The
21ST CENTURY AFRICA

A Festschrift for
Prof. Patrick A. Edewor @ 60

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PREFACE

The book *The social sciences and sustainable development in the 21st century Africa* is a festschrift rustled up in honour of our own very cerebral, easy-going, pleasantly natured, pious and experienced academic, Professor Patrick A. Edewor. The thematic bent of the book, which underscores a very important subject which has fascinated the attention of the globalised world for a long time now, inclusive of the international community, sovereign nations, the civil society community, the intelligentsia, business, the faith sector, the media and others, generates a blitzkrieg as the peoples of the world have met (and still meet) on how to orchestrate development in a sustainable way for the benefit of the present and future occupiers of the earth. In other words, sustainable development compels the present generation to reasonably, conscientiously and sustainably exploit the resources in the environment such as energy, water, climate, mineral deposits, and others so as not to jeopardise the survival of the future generation. This was why in 2015, United Nations member states met to endorse the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which comprises 17 goals which, in all, aim to induct a sustainable world in which environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and economic development enjoy sacrosanctity.

While the rest of the modern world is taking the sustainable development “movement” seriously and is committing resources, putting plans and structures in place to achieve the 17 ambitious but transformative and people-centred Sustainable Development Goals, twenty-first century Africa appears to struggle and straggle. With a population of 1.3 billion people as at 3rd January, 2019, and projected to double by 2050, if there is any continent that should be hastily and univocally focused on changing the painful narratives that have dogged and togaed it, it is the African continent. African countries have straggled off the path of sustainable development over the years, and this has resulted in the climate of unsavouriness which pervades the region. Majority of African youths are jobless, with huge numbers in the not in employment, education or training (NEET) population; the healthcare system is moribund at best and comatose at worst; insecurity percolates the countries; infrastructural amenities are generally in deficit; leadership is poor, distanced from the people and insensately kleptomaniac, and the painfully vicious cycle of

brain-drain continues unabatedly. Young Africans, and those who can afford it, now leave the continent in droves through official and desert channels to find greener pastures abroad.

Consequently, this festschrift is a timely tome that has received various contributions from scholars far and wide, particularly those of the social science provenance or academy, to lend their research efforts and voices to the need for sustainable development to happen in and for twenty-first century Africa. Africa cannot afford to be baby-sat all the time. It needs to grow up and take responsibility for its destiny and the realisation of its vast human and natural resources. The social science academy, comprising researchers, scholars, thinkers and scientists, has its work cut out for it. On the various pages of this festschrift, there is a call to use our intellectual and other resources and endowments to rescue Africa so that in this twenty-first century, it can transition from being the continent of promise to becoming the continent of success.

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The Social Sciences and Sustainable Development in the Twenty-First Century Africa

David IMHONOPI

Abstract

The need for twenty-first century Africa to achieve sustainable development has become urgent and compelling. Although draped in natural resources in abundance, Africa continues to trail the rest of the world in many areas such as education, healthcare, decent employment, infrastructural amenities, food security, considerable per capita income, technological progress and access to technological tools per capita, security and others. This paper attempts to dissect the rubric of sustainable development in twenty-first century Africa and the role of the social sciences. Using the theoretical paradigms of Modernisation and Human Development theories, the chapter captures the need for African societies to embrace the secrets of development as employed by developed countries and to prioritise human development in place of statistics-laden economic growth and development. The paper identifies the role that the social science academy can and should play for the sustainable development of Africa, particularly regarding the realisation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with its 17 goals.

Keywords: *Social Sciences, Social Science Academy, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals, Africa*

Introduction

The imperative for sustainable development in twenty-first century Africa continues to perturb African and international governments, leaders, development institutions, civil society groups, and a cortege of stakeholders including academia, particularly those belonging to the social science family of disciplines (Edewor, Imhonopi, & Urim, 2014). Africa continues to trail the rest of the world when such human development indices (HDIs) as education, healthcare (covering the gamut of child, maternal and adult

healthcare), decent employment, which affords decent income to workers, infrastructural amenities, food security, considerable per capita income, technological progress and access to technological tools per capita and security are considered (Edewor, Imhonopi, & Amusan, 2014). The ugly frame of reference which Africa paints, when these HDIs are considered in comparison with the rest of the world, including other developing societies, should force a greater involvement of the social science academy in devising scientific and methodological processes, culminating in groundbreaking, socially relevant research output and social cum corporate interventions, to support other stakeholders working to improve the general weltschmerz that characterises the life of Africans and life in Africa at the beginning of the 21st century.

For instance, out of the 47 least developed countries (LDCs), designated by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), a group of independent experts working for and reporting to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), 33 (about 70%) of these countries are found in Africa, 8 are in Asia but none in Europe and America (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2018). The African countries that made this list include Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. These countries show negative indicia of either failed, failing or struggling states. In fact, they are specifically characterised by agrarian economies, dominance of the informal sector, chronic current account deficits and they remain highly dependent on external resources to finance a significant portion of their investments and part of their consumption (UNCTAD, 2018).

Another example is that many African countries are now trapped in debts borrowed from China, a country which has become a potential coloniser and mortgagee of Africa's vast untapped natural resources and on which many African countries now depend (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016; Olukotun, 2018; Tella, 2018). As Tella (2018, para. 6) observed, "China is all over Africa constructing roads and bridges, establishing manufacturing firms, agricultural farms and rendering services in technical areas. This was a country that was behind many African countries a little over three decades ago!" The pathetic Polaroid of Africa's socioeconomic, political and environmental crises