



**Department of Geography, Environmental Management and Energy
Studies**

GR2BFET – HUMAN GEOGRAPHY: DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Date: 7 September 2020 **Total:** 50 Marks

Time: 1 hour 30 mins **Lecturer:** Ms Stockigt

QUESTION 1

Discuss the role of social media in Africans re-visioning of Africa, highlight the danger of a single story. (10)

Electronic / cyber space is a medium that is becoming richer and more diverse and has the potential to greatly expand the African conversation.

- There are a lot of academic bloggers, others include research organisations, NGOs, consultants and businesses.
- There is no mechanism to rate blog quality.
- Blogging offers new genre and access to academic textual production.
- Some of its advantages; its current, immediacy and ability to disseminate on the ground reporting that is not covered in conventional texts.

Social media platforms such as blogs generate knowledge outside of the classroom and traditional libraries.

- These media platforms are changing the way African topics are written about.
 - The downside of social media is its huge size and varying quality and coherence (devoid of quality filters).
 - Social media postings about Africa can be confusing as they are provocative and informative.
 - Social media platforms allow opportunities for different and sometimes alternative voices.
- The web offers a different platform of hope and possibility to change popular perceptions about Africans.
- Decades of academic research have not effectively communicated different ideas about Africa to non-academics.
 - The internet is better than traditional media as it extends beyond immediate media spaces.
 - Some of the drawbacks to Africa on the web and social media exist; information is often fragmentary and it takes time and effort to provide coherence to multiple sources of information.
 - Overall, internet space has the potential to enlarge the positive representation of Africa by providing increasing comments on new and alternative knowledge by society.

Africans re-visioning of Africa

There is no 'one size fits all' or 'off the shelf' model to solve complex African challenges.

- Virtually everyone acknowledges that Africa has challenges; economic, leadership, social and environmental.
- Despite Africa's vast natural resources, many of its people remain in poverty, squalor, destitution and environmental degradation.
- Largely leaders and elites can be blamed.

- Many leaders are prioritising holding onto power, affording them little energy for anything else. Thousands of international NGOs and consultants who are flown in for external assistance –their collective weight makes it difficult for Africans to gain their own voice and recover their humanity.
- Many Africans are now seeking to answer complex questions. African academics, policy-makers and commentators have been arguing for some time that Africa's future must be founded upon indigenous roots and partnerships.
- A wide spectrum of ideas on alternative development has been put forward.

QUESTION 2

Write an essay critically discussing the 7 debates around alternative development in Africa. (15)

1. Restructuring global economic arrangements (unchaining Africa).

Samir Amin (an Egyptian political economist) emphasizes Africa delinking from the global economy as the only viable choice for Africa.

- It is based on the assumption that the international financial system is unfair and disadvantageous to Africa.
- Neo-colonialism, exploitative relations and lack of African peoples' autonomy means that only mal-development can take root.
- Economic projects in Africa have not brought about human and social development instead African are generally poorer than the rest of the world.

The departure from the global economy can only happen under a better balance of political and economic organization of the global economy –a system that does not only benefit an elite in the global North.

- Radical African political economists now argue that alternative thinking is needed about Africa's resources –even a consideration of leaving them in the ground.

2. Increasing financial transparency and ending the looting of Africa.

Africa is being drained of resources by the global financial system, who've built the instruments that make an off-shore world.

- The global financial system operates from key centers such as London and Paris.
- Off-shoring reaches deep into African societies via corrupt officials and various companies that will do all within their power to avoid paying taxes.
- Individual interests at the expense of societal interest rule the day –secrecy, greed and excessive profiteering knit local and international players together.

Local and international organizations such as the world bank are now starting to put more emphasis on mechanisms for asset recovery and transparency.

- Major banks are being used to divert funds –but the money flows through a complex maze. The money does not flow in obvious and transparent geographies.

- The off-shore financial terrain is now even locating to African tax havens –e.g., Mauritius.

Africa continues to be looted. The corporate crime wave is global –stretching from Africa over the Americas to China, India and almost anywhere else.

- The wealth, power and illegality enabled by this system is now so vast that it threatens the global economy's legitimacy.

- The looting of Africa that began centuries ago continues today, entailing transfers of natural resources, human resources (slaves in past / skilled graduates today), antiquities, animals, ivory –this trend is most evident today in the transfer of siphoned money.

Minorities or elites are appropriating large amounts of the region's assets, while the general public via their governments are stuck in excessive public debt.

- Few funds ever return to Africa. London is the epicenter of African outflows through a banking and legal system which provided an escape route for capital at the time when African countries were gaining independence.

- Opponents of looting argue that policies designed to help Africa are nothing more than a façade as they end up benefitting Western institutions and global financial industry more than Africa itself.

- Africans need to engage in self-activity and in campaigns to ensure that there are more stringent curbs on the outflow of money and for better transparency.

3.Promoting better political leadership.

The Ibrahim prize –is an incentive to improve leadership in Africa.

- Business and intellectual elites are convinced that improving government leadership is one of the most effective ways to transform Africa from within.
 - In reality manyAfrican leaders are more motivated to cling to power –rather than to put their energies towards developing their economies.
 - Corruption is widespread as a means toprovide for their own welfare when they leave office.
- Leadership is important because it sets priorities for development.
- In the past African leaders were pre-occupied with blaming their failures on external factors, scarcely reflecting on internal deficiencies.
 - Many efforts to improve Africa’s leadership deficit can only be positive for all.

4.Supporting sustainable environmental development.

Many of Africa’s poor understand the relationship between the environmental degradation and poverty and are more motivated by conservation. This is largely lost in the global North.

- Various programs through international originations like UNEP exist, e.g., planting of trees.
- The planting of commercial crops –means forests were cleared for export-oriented agriculture. Exotic species of trees were introduced for the lumber industry. E.g., Kenya lost 90% of its indigenous forest in 50 years (1950 -2000).
- Deforestation, soil run-off, soil erosion and degradation of water supplies are common.

5.Ending aid.

With last 50 years –US \$ 1 trillion of foreign aid has been remitted to Africa.

- Largest aid receiving region in the world.
 - Aid is given via loans, grants, labourand expertise.
 - Multi-lateral agencies, National governments, private org., NGOs all participate in the multi-layered global aid regime.
 - Many different types of aid exist; project aid (schools), program aid (sectoral support for agriculture or education), budget support (direct financial support).
 - Aid has financially benefitted governments, NGOs and community-based organizations, but its effectiveness is always open to debate. Its impact is difficult to measure and quantify.
 - The terms and conditions of aid are rarely defined by the people of Africa.
 - There is the perspective that aid may prevent African countries from developing by allowing their rulers to avoid long-term solutions.
 - Aid may be destroying local initiatives and holding Africans back.
 - As the Ugandans say “begged water does not quench a thirst”
- Dambisa Moyo(Zambian born economist) argues that aid is a disaster in Africa and that it is a disease pretending to be a cure. Aid fosters dependence, encourages corruption, ultimately perpetuates poverty and bad governance.
- Sachs (economist) believes that ending aid would be irresponsible and damage the poorest of Africans –some 400 million living in extreme poverty.
 - Not all aid is bad and cannot generalize e.g., aid for farmers to grow more crops, childhood vaccinations, school meals, and anti-retroviral medicine for Aids sufferers, etc.
 - The future of foreign aid in Africa is an important debate.
 - Aid can make a difference but should not distract governments from promoting “self” development.
 - Africa’s future will ultimately not depend on aid, but more on the efforts of its people and governments.

6.Promoting civil society participation in development.

A plethora of civil society organisationsand NGOs emerged in the 1990s.

- The term civil society pertains to the population of groups formed primarily outside the state and a place for collective purposes.
- Holds ambitious aims of equality and justice, democracy and tolerance.

- This landscape is diverse and complex, but poverty reduction is the common denominator for many civil society organizations in Africa.
 - In theory civil society constitutes a space for action outside of the state.
 - When communities own their own information, they are able to gather more accurate information and then become active partners in their development.
 - Activities such as community mapping create a space for communities to identify development priorities, organize leadership at street and household levels and build community consensus – which facilitates local development and envisioning of an alternative future.
- It promotes the belief among the poor that they can become experts in their own development and continue towards a collective vision.
- It also breaks the isolation of those in poverty and reclaims local learning.

7. Promoting alternative ways to understand Africa and African urban society by a postcolonial lens.

Post-colonialism is a post-modern reaction to and analysis of the cultural legacy of colonialism.

- The post-colonial lens reverses the gaze (the way you look at issues) from an African perspective.
- Emphasis is directed toward grassroots actors and the politics of struggle. Looking at cities in their true state as opposed to comparing African cities with Northern cities.
- Liberating thinkers to imagine other and different future possibilities.

QUESTION 3

Using relevant examples, discuss the characteristics and challenges of the informal economy in the context of Africa. (15)

- Informal sector – is informal with a lack of legal recognition, regulation and protection.
- Ranges from street trade to working from home.
- Experienced massive growth in global south, up to 72% of employment in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Characterized by insecurity, poverty and vulnerability.
- Argued that globalization has contributed to informal employment – removal of labour market protection, increase in part time work.
- A gendered perspective reveals female representation is high, up to 60%.
- There are 4 different tiers of workers;
 - **Subsistence workers:** lowest paid and most insecure, e.g., garbage pickers
 - **Small scale entrepreneurs and traders:** petty commodities, some independence, creativity and flexibility. E.g., street traders, artisans.
 - **Petty capitalists:** might work in formal wage labour. Main reason to enter is for profit. E.g., recycling, IT, media etc.
 - **Criminal operators:** illegal activities such as drug trade, prostitution, sex trade, etc.

Needed to provide a description of what this economy entails, what and who are involved. Then had to highlight challenges including lack of regulation, issues of workers rights, basic safety standard not being met etc.

Finally, had to provide specific examples from SA context.

QUESTION 4

Using examples, briefly discuss the emergence and threat of terrorism in certain regions of Africa. (10)

Africa has a recent history of terrorist strikes on Western targets that precede the 9/11 attacks. E.g., bombings of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998 which killed 224 people including 12 Americans.

- Since 9/11 these attacks have become more frequent and various terrorist efforts on the continent is focused on generating money (E.g., kidnapping of Westerners in Mali, Kenya, Nigeria and Somalia).
- The attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi on Sept 21 2013 by AlShabaab killed 67 shoppers and sent shockwaves about terrorism in Africa around the world. A week later a radical Islamic group murdered 40 college students while they slept in their dorm in Gujba, northern Nigeria and Al-Qaeda detonated a car bomb in Timbuktu.
- Some consider Africa to be a new frontline for international terrorism.
- Many of these terrorist groups are not uniform entities but factionalised organisations that are constantly evolving in response to internal power struggles and global responses. Some have made arguments that terrorism is a desperate attempt to elevate weakened groups. The extremely vulnerable state of Africa, that encourages terrorism, could be considered a result of colonial legacies.
- Extreme localism, nationalism, pan-Islamism and global networks are intermingled, making it hard to decipher the goals of the network. The subject of terrorism in Africa is always going to be a highly speculative one.
- Several hotspots of terrorism activity are evident in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In the East African corridor there is Al-Shabaab, which emerged in 2006 during a period when Ethiopia invaded Somalia. From 2007 to 2011 the organization controlled much of south and central Somalia. They practice illegal trade to raise funds. E.g., trade in ivory.
- Since 2010 the organisation has received strong backing from Al-Qaeda as well as support from Eritrea. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) – operates largely in the Sahel, with a logistical base in northern Mali.
- AQIM aspires to rid the region of Western influence and to install fundamentalist regimes that will function under Islamic religious (Sharia law).
- AQIM also participates in international narcotic smuggling.
- In north eastern Nigeria there is the group called Boko Haram
- Boko Haram members are mainly loose groupings of radical Islamists.
- The group emerged in 2002 and set up a separatist community on the basis of Islamic fundamentalism in the village of Kanama on the Nigeria-Niger border.
- A 2011 suicide bomber attack on a UN compound in Abuja killed 23 people There has been an escalation of attacks on government institutions, churches, secular schools resulting in the killing of 4000 people (2011-2014) and student abductions are on the rise.
- During its first decade the group focused mainly on internal northern Nigerian targets – but in 2013 Washington designated the group a foreign terrorist group.
- The presence of terrorism in the region is enhanced by an abundance of physical safe havens, porous borders and endemic poverty, all against the backdrop of ethnic and other conflicts and undertrained and underequipped national military forces.
- Specific spaces in slums, rural deserts, maritime zones – outside of government

control and purview are potential hotbeds for radicalization. It is important to emphasise that poverty does not breed terrorism. Many Africans have long experienced conditions of prolonged poverty and still managed to survive.

- Frustration is growing over lack of employment and opportunities. As a consequence alienation, marginalisation, and (possible) radicalisation are new challenges for Africans and the international community to manage. In Africa HIV/Aids, ethnic conflict, and endemic poverty kills more people than terrorism.
- The destabilising power of terrorism however has risen to national and regional agendas.
- Terrorism in Africa exacerbates difficulties of economic and sustainable development.
- Attacks might discourage trade, investment and tourism and displace communities.
- The landscape of terrorism in Africa is constantly changing.