PERSPECTIVES ON "AFRICAN POTENTIALS"

Sam MOYO
Sam Moyo African Institute for Agrarian Studies
Yoichi MINE
Graduate School of Global Studies, Doshisha University

ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper was originally presented by Professor Sam Moyo at the 5th African Forum of the "African Potentials" project organised at Addis Ababa from October 31 to November 1, 2015. The "African Potentials" project is an international research endeavour funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), of which Sam was an active member and a respected mentor.[1] The paper is an early version of the introductory chapter of *What Colonialism Ignored: "African Potentials" for Resolving Conflicts in Southern Africa* (edited by Sam Moyo & Yoichi Mine, Langaa RPCIG, 2016), a major posthumous work of Sam. At the time of the Addis Ababa Forum, we were still engaged in the rigorous co-writing of the introductory chapter by exchanging e-mails between Harare and Kyoto. Sam then took the lead in editing and reformatting the latest draft into this offshoot paper for the Forum.

I think this paper is especially meaningful in two ways. First, this version reflects the elements of the proposition of "African Potentials" that Sam wanted to emphasise in person (though he respected the part of my modest contribution). Second, the last section of this paper contains key initiatives that Sam crafted with care. To nurture and expand trans-regional research networks, he wanted to have these six-point initiatives widely discussed by the next generation African scholars and Japanese/Asian Africanists, and this is why I wanted to publish this version of our writing in *African Study Monographs* with only technical revisions.

Sadly, now, it is not possible to obtain Sam's explicit agreement any more, but I have no doubt that he would be very happy that this document is presented to the public in this form. In the "African Potentials" fora, Sam enjoyed conversation with African and Asian anthropologists and sociologists who then highly appreciated Sam's sharp political-economy interventions with his characteristic wide smile.

A luta continua!

Yoichi Mine

INTRODUCTION

Narrow conceptual frameworks are often used to attribute violent conflicts to internal "dysfunction" and "barbarism" of African society. Yet, recently, the image of "rising Africa" has also become popular, given that the continent's export of primary goods to the global markets has increased on a much larger scale, leading to markedly high growth rates. However, this conceptual framework is limited to a shallow causality of trade expansion, prosperity and stability. This said, Afro-optimism can easily be shattered, when the present extroverted development pattern proves to be unsustainable. While powers in global capitalism regard Africa as the land of opportunity, their interventions produce and aggravate contradictions across African society, leading to renewed pessimism.

Although the call for African solutions to African problems has given rise to various new initiatives when it comes to addressing violence and poverty, these efforts have not been sufficient. New geo-political imperatives shape the "scramble for Africa," in which global capital acquires extraordinary shares of land and resources, as forms of trade, aid and foreign direct investment (FDI) shift. New Asian investments diversify Africa's international relations, gradually diminishing conventional Euro-American influence. This provides strategic opportunities to transform African societies, with their complex mix of diversity and commonality. The challenge for Africa is to release the potential of the people's agency to solve Africa's problems, transcending parochial identities and going beyond the dichotomy of "tradition/modernity."

The "Southern African Potentials" Forum organised in Harare in 2012 sought to challenge and shift the centre of gravity away from Euro-American scholarship to deepen intellectual collaboration in an alternative "East-South" frame. It brought together scholars in history, anthropology, sociology and political economy and, through intensive debate, elaborated the notion of "African Potentials" to explore mechanisms that are utilised to bring about "conflict resolution and co-existence" in the African settings from below. The Forum discussed the nature of violent conflicts in contemporary Southern Africa, paying attention to the transformative dynamics of society and evaluating existing approaches for addressing conflicts, and sought an alternative vision called "African Potentials." An academic book jointly written by African scholars and Japanese Africanists will be published as a result.

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONFLICT REGIME: VIOLENCE AND DISARTICULATION

Given that the Southern African conflict regime is complex, ambiguous and often paradoxical, it is proposed that its "Potentials" can only be realised when the structural violence embedded in global capitalism (as shaped by the settler-colonial trajectory) is addressed in fundamental ways. Structural violence in the Southern African countryside entails a unique accumulation

trajectory, as compared to the rest of the continent, although such trajectories seem to lead to a convergence. Elements of African Potentials are found in long historical processes: the historical mobility, flexibility and openness of African society. These elements contribute to the everyday practices that are a part of conflict resolution, which persist even today despite colonial and post-colonial distortions.

In 1994, South Africa's transition to the African non-racial majority rule promised a peace dividend to the entire region. However, the South African transition could barely contain conflicting aspirations and emotions, including "tribal identities." The social life of South African neoliberal cities is tormented by rampant crime, insecurities and growing inequalities, compared for instance to the relative calmness of everyday life in Harare, even though Zimbabwe is classified as a "failed state" by the Western powers. Yet, in the 2000s, relatively "stable" countries such as Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Madagascar continued to be affected by election-related violence.

Nevertheless, the GDP growth rates of Southern African countries surpassed 5 percent on average during the first decade and a half of the 21st century, largely due to the rising demand for natural resources in Asian economies. However, the present growth, induced by the export of primary products, has precipitated renewed insecurity and vulnerability in African society. As the wealth is increasingly possessed by a handful of land and mineral "grabbing" barons around economic enclaves, frustration is fermenting among the alienated masses. Furthermore, the recent burst of the commodity bubble has sharply shrunk external resource flows, making the life of peasants and workers, as well as the positions of ruling classes, much more precarious.

The "New Scramble for Africa" is changing the landscape of the countryside as land concentration leads toward a convergence of historical trajectories of capital accumulation based on large-scale farming and transnational agribusiness. The rise of Sinophobia and Sinophilia is found almost everywhere in African countries, as Chinese goods, labour and capital are entrenched at an unprecedented rate. The fact, however, is that global monopoly capital, both Western and Eastern, capitalise on "investment opportunities" created by neoliberal policies to assert control over land and resources in Africa, and the entry of China is used to impose a renewed, orderly "partition" of Africa that is deemed to be more "equitable" for all external and internal capitalist speculators. This process constitutes the most significant setting for violent conflict and renewed geopolitical militarisation in Africa (Moyo et al., 2012).

Compared to the magnitude of human suffering in global human history, according to Julius Nyerere (2000: xiv): "the surprising thing is not that there has been so much political instability in Africa but that there has been so much stability, although this fact is less publicized internationally." In the past quarter-century, however, parts of the relatively peaceful African countryside have been shaken successively by rebellious groups and armed rogues, alongside more disciplined attempts such as those in rural Zimbabwe to address the lingering colonial legacy.

These conflicts are connected to imperialist forces, which increasingly control the land and resources and take advantage of internal strife among Africans. The continent is entering an age of precarious transition and dynamic change, and the focus of these struggles is in the countryside. Continuous external interventions and evolving contradictions make the future of Africa much more complicated and unpredictable, although the resilience of African peoples and states is evident. Strong undercurrents of social processes that mediate conflicts and enable transformation throughout recent history of Africa suggest that legitimate "African Potentials" will be able to transform African society.

THREE PREDOMINANT PERSPECTIVES ON AFRICAN CONFLICTS

The "African Potentials" Forum held at Harare discussed three predominant perspectives to understand the nature of violent confrontations. The first is the notion of Africa's "backwardness," which has been rife in the discourse of popular journalism as well as academic writings on Africa in the West. Within this framework, Africa is regarded as a continent of self-destruction, its society is intrinsically emotional, irrational and abusive since ancient times and will remain so forever. This perspective is buttressed by the theory of neopatrimonialism, a mainstream theoretical framework in African studies, based on the Weberian categorisation of human societies and the Eurocentric perception of the "otherness" of non-Western societies (see Bach & Gazibo, 2012; Mkandawire, 2013). With few exceptions, most academic writings pursue this culturalist line of thought, whereby the essence of African society is considered timeless, unchangeable and incapable of creating a new order. If there is anything worth engaging with in Africa, it is the land, minerals and natural resources, not the people.

This reductionist cultural discourse obscures reality, reflecting a Malthusian fear of population explosion at the periphery of the global capitalist system. However, such fears also reflect the real frustration of the majority of the world's population, who comprise a mass semi-proletariat living in the countryside and facing accelerated pauperisation and marginalisation. These are human persons enduring an ongoing process of enclosure and structural neglect. The current trajectory could lead to the genocide of half of humanity unless a democratic, labour-absorbing type of agricultural revolution firmly based on peasant production is pursued (Amin, 1990; 2011; Moyo & Yeros, 2005).

The second approach to addressing the African conflict discussed at the Forum involves the perspective of universal justice and human rights. Based on the flawed perception that local people are unable to realise post-conflict reconciliation by themselves, this approach seeks to implant universal principles from above. This is typically shown in the legal action taken by the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has largely prosecuted Africans. While the responsibility of some African political leaders for the gross violation of human rights is undeniable,

the practitioners of international laws and human rights seldom pay attention to the attempts at social healing taking place at village and street levels, despite the fact that most atrocities were committed at these local levels. This approach also absolves external actors which generate the structural injustices underlying these conflicts.

Another variation of this top-down approach involves constitutional engineering to contain political confrontations and emotions, such as power-sharing arrangements to "normalise" the war-town states. Although the arrangements can be negotiated by local politicians through the mediation of a regional organization, theorists of social engineering still tend to regard their prescriptions as one-size-fits-all recipes (Mine et al., 2013). To this end, Paul Collier comes up with an extreme proposal suggesting that the Western players should force undemocratic leaders of African governments to accept election results by threatening military intervention while trusting the "rational" behaviours of dictators (Collier, 2009).

In the realm of economics, the proposition of individual property rights propounded by Hernando de Soto has been favoured by the World Bank and has wielded influence over the policy making of national governments in Africa (Soto, 2000). Certain forms of justice, electoral democracy as well as the stabilization of land tenure system are all required for any government, but the problem is that most of these top-down attempts presuppose a convergence around an idealised Western liberal democracy, rather than developing hybrid systems accommodating local needs and participatory dynamics. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and its experiments of "inclusive governments," as well as other efforts at reconciliation, such as in Namibia (since 1990) and Zimbabwe from 1980 to 1990, fit into this latter mould to some extent.

Thirdly, a new "traditionalist" perspective was discussed, given that studies of history and anthropology have widely accepted that many of the seemingly "African" practices were "invented" under colonial power relations (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Mamdani, 2012). In post-colonial situations, there have been several attempts to realise conflict resolution and reconciliation at the societal level by resurrecting and reconstructing past practices of community justice through the "reinvention" of traditions. Attempts that have fully involved rural villagers include the Gacaca court in Rwanda, a community justice system established in 2001 to speed up the trial of the suspects of genocide crime (Clark, 2010). Aside from these formal experiments, traditional rituals were explicitly utilized as a method to heal the wounds of civil war at the village level in Mozambique (see also Hayner, 2001). Although these tradition-based practices of conflict resolution reflect bottom-up ingenuity, such institutions also have the risk of falling prey to post-colonial despots in the shadow of late colonial bifurcation of the "modern" world of urban citizens and the "traditional" world of rural peasants (Mamdani, 1996).

While the second universal approach and the third new traditionalist approach appear to be irreconcilable as opposites, in reality, they are embedded together

within the single space of post-colonial Africa. The contradiction of modernity and tradition is especially palpable in Southern Africa, where indigenous communities have been exposed for more than a century to the political and cultural influence of settler communities. Furthermore, in this region, the duality of colonial rulers has sometimes resulted in unintended consequences of strengthening the practice of "divide and rule," as demonstrated in the case of the Herero and Ovambo division in Namibia. People claim that their own traditions are historically justifiable but they are often rendered inflexible and exploited by the overarching rulers.

AFRICAN POTENTIALS: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH?

African Potentials are tentatively defined as the capabilities of Africans to resolve contradictions among the people, utilising indigenous knowledge on human relations that has constantly transformed and accumulated at the level of people's everyday life (Moyo & Mine, 2016). The development of the art of conflict resolution and transformation has persisted throughout pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times, and African Potentials can be reviewed in two dimensions related to space and time. However, a distinction ought to be made between *personal* (or *direct*) violence and *structural* (or *indirect*) violence (see Galtung, 1969).

When the military kills innocent civilians, that homicide is an act of personal violence. When rural children die of avoidable infectious diseases in the periphery of global capitalism, structural violence is committed; as the children's potential to have a long life is crushed by external influence and structural poverty. Similarly, the infringement of food sovereignty of nations in the South that imposes avoidable starvation on people is a clear manifestation of structural violence. While structural violence is often accompanied by personal violence and vice versa, these two notions of violence should not be confused. Absence of personal violence and absence of structural violence are both desirable goals of global transformation, and the former is called "negative peace" while the latter is called "positive peace."

The concept of structural violence illuminates the anti-human nature of poverty and exploitation, which are regarded here as a form of violence, even if they are caused by a system with no explicit intention of harming individuals; capitalists do not beat workers with their whips in person (Moyo & Mine, 2016). Polarisation of the world into the centre in which autocentric development is on track and the periphery in which disarticulation permeates economy and society, as well as unequal exchange embedded in the global trade system, does exist. However, it may not be visible unless we look at reality through the lens of a scientific theory of global capitalism (Amin, 1976). On the other hand, personal violence may function even without resorting to physical violence at all; a threat to use violence may suffice to fetter action on the part of the potential victims of violence. Exercise of personal violence may indeed trigger

a chain of grave violence (e.g., the role of Western nations in the Rwandan Genocide and the toppling Gaddafi in Libya in the name of responsibility to protect). This kind of violence precipitated personal violence in Maghreb, in the Sahel countries and in regions of Central Africa. The dichotomous world of centre-periphery is rife with both structural and personal violence, and Africa is in the line of fire.

While we define violence as the difference between the actual and the potential, the notion of African Potentials suggests further considerations. In an imaginary state in which both personal violence and structural violence are abolished, with the actual matching the potential, the actual shape of such an accomplished state remains vague. In terms of popular interpretation of human development, in such a state, all individuals would be able to enjoy longevity, a decent life, a good education with a fair distribution of resources. However, human potentials do not only cover the socio-economic well-being of individuals but are also closely tied to collective self-determination in the political and cultural spheres; the realization of national, communal and personal dignity is therefore essential. Given the diversity of value in use, a hypothetical society in which all potentials are realized will be substantially different from the average shape of homogeneous "global society." Such hypothetical spaces will be diverse, given the wide variety of local and regional histories and belief systems, as well as the diversity present in ecological systems. This is the reason why we speak about "African" potentials rather than abstract human potentials.

However, a blanket notion of Africa is problematic, as Africa is extremely diverse, not only in terms of ecosystems, cultures, religions and languages but also with relation to economic structures and political systems. The unique position of the Southern African region suggests that its conflict regime is based on the history of foreign control over land and resources, testifying the glaring truth that primitive accumulation of capital is not just a one-off event but a sustained process. At the same time, the economic activities of monopoly capitalism have closely integrated the entire region, thereby making an agenda of the liberation of the whole region realistic.

Historically, Southern Africa has been a microcosm of global structural and personal violence, which has been consolidated by the legal and cultural superstructure of Euro-centric racism, as well as by sophisticated military machines targeting the whole region to protect the racial order of Apartheid. This historical path of agrarian accumulation in Southern Africa differs from the path travelled by the rest of the continent.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND ACCUMULATION TRAJECTORIES IN AFRICA

Patterns of conflict over land and resources in Africa continue to be defined by the agrarian structures that have taken shape through the history of colonial scramble for Africa in the past centuries. Three macro-scale trajectories of capital

accumulation are discernible: first, the labour reserve political economies mainly in Southern Africa; second, the resource extraction concession enclaves mainly in Central Africa; third, the trade economies grounded on the extraction of surpluses from African peasantries across West and Eastern Africa (Amin, 1976). These diverse historical paths created intense but varied patterns of structural violence.

An "Africa of the labour reserves" emerged through land dispossession and displacement of the peasantry, which was conducive to monopolistic control over land and water resources as well as increased infrastructure investments for the benefit of white settlers. This plainly unequal structure is manifest in such places as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Kenya and Algeria on a large scale, as well as in their neighbours such as Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique on a smaller scale (Denoon, 1972; Magubane, 1979). This process clearly shifted the main producers of food from African peasants toward large-scale European farmers with the support of state marketing boards and European merchants. In addition, from the 1950s, new enclaves of highly subsidised agro-industrial estates were expanded in this region.

Even though the continuous process of land dispossession seriously undermined the livelihoods of African peasantry (almost completely in South Africa) and caused "land hunger," this accumulation "from above" fell short of the total dispossession of peasant lands. Instead, based on a functional dualism that subjugated labour and repressed peasant farming, the process resulted in the creation and preservation of "labour reserves," the homes of migrant workers who were exposed to super-exploitation. This settler mode of accumulation placed the burden of the social reproduction of cheap labour on the shoulders of peasantries in segregated "communal" areas, where "tribal" authority was preserved and recreated by the settler regime to regulate the systems (Moyo & Yeros, 2005). Today, domestic and foreign capitalist farmers seek to insert themselves into this arena through the mediation of chiefs and the state. This instrumentalisation of tradition and universal values (land and tenure) makes it imperative for us to discuss the ambiguity of the roles of traditional leaders in conceptualising African Potentials in Southern African contexts.

In an "Africa of the concessions," several significant agricultural and mining enclaves were formed around plantations with rudimentary agro-processing facilities, typically in Central Africa. This entailed the plunder of raw material and limited infrastructural investments by trading and mining conglomerates. This mode of accumulation entailed direct control of the resources by transnational capital, rather than the creation of a domestic bourgeoisie based on the indigenous population or European settlers. Such enclaves were sustained only by the merciless use of personal violence: military control and forcible recruitment of cheap labour. The pedigree of resistance to this enclave dispossession, for instance in Cameroon, is well documented (Crowder, 1968). The enclaves were not directly integrated into local economic development, though after independence the creation and incorporation of peasantries started to supplement the enclaves, except where large oil and mining enclaves overshadowed national

policies.

In an "Africa of the *économie de traite*," seemingly autonomous peasants are forced to produce a quota of specific export products. This practice was developed and sustained for two centuries of European mercantilism, typically in West and Eastern Africa. Although this mode of accumulation was also premised on the rule of "traditional" chiefs buttressed by colonial administration along the line of "indirect rule" of Lord Lugard, the difference from the first path is that peasants were encouraged to produce more on the land. This type of colonisation led to the pervasive growth of "petty (agricultural) commodity production" among increasingly differentiated peasantries (Bernstein, 2002) or "small cultivators" (Mafeje, 2003). Critically, this mode of colonization also gave rise to institutionalised labour migration based on various extra-economic measures other than forceful land alienation.

In West Africa, a vast number of farmers migrated from northern territories into the coastal and forest areas where agricultural commercialisation was focused on tropical crop exports. In the end, this trajectory has been conducive not only to the creation of diverse peasantries but also to intense land conflict in places like today's Côte d'Ivoire, where there have been attempts to deprive "alien northerners" of their entitlements. Even in the peasant societies of this third category, large-scale agricultural estates (e.g., palm oil) emerged from the 1940s and led to the creation of new enclaves as the drive to modernise agriculture grew.

The gradual transformation of the agro-based African political economy since the beginning of the 21st century and the prolonged crisis of the world capitalist system has produced a new wave of accumulation by land dispossession in Africa at large, partly through fraudulent land grabbing, as well as more generally through the erosion of both rural and urban incomes due to wage repression and price hikes, which brings social reproduction based in the African countryside into crisis (Moyo et al., 2013). The renewed interest in oil, gas and mineral extraction accompanies the most recent surge in land alienation, expanding the production of food, bio-fuels and natural resources for export at the expense of food sovereignty. The same process intensifies the exploitation of water resources and undermines the livelihoods of peasants and pastoralists.

Under present global neoliberal conditions, small and scattered forms of land concentration started to emerge in the 1990s even in non-settler Africa. This seems to have established a fragile merchant path of agrarian accumulation that involves non-rural capital gaining access to land. This accumulation path is now being overtaken by a wider process of large-scale land alienation led by both Western and Eastern foreign capital, often with African domestic allies. Although many "land deals" have not yet been confirmed, this uncertainty itself has fuelled political upheaval as occurred in Madagascar. This continental process of land and agrarian transformation is now installing a new "junker" path of accumulation across Africa, which is transforming parts of the African countryside to perform the function of impoverished labour reserves in parallel with the creation of more agricultural enclaves (Moyo et al., 2013).

This trend seems to suggest a gradual convergence of the three macro accumulation trajectories, with agrarian capital and expertise from Southern Africa playing an important role in the scramble for land. The varied and yet converging accumulation trajectories continue to be at the heart of uneven development, exclusion and poverty in Africa. This process constitutes a key factor of the major conflicts and provokes widespread resistances throughout the continent. The radicalisation of Zimbabwe since 1997 is a case in point (Moyo, 2008). The ongoing struggle for land in Southern Africa, therefore, has critical implications for the future of Africa as a whole.

AFRICAN POTENTIALS IN HISTORY

African Potentials should be considered in terms of both spatial and temporal dimensions, reflecting the continent's integration into the space of world capitalist system, and its continued exposure to forms of severe personal and structural violence that centre around land and agrarian inequalities occasioned by different modes of European colonial penetration. Extending the time horizon a little further back to pre-colonial times enables us to "rediscover" the continuity of African agency. While going along with the "reinvention" of traditions thesis, we ought not to romanticise the African past. Nonetheless, elements of past practices for possible conflict resolution did not die out but persist into today's Africa, even though such potentials have been constrained by colonial and post-colonial politics.

Multifarious African societies have been consolidated into a larger polity that might face serious fission again, rendering the overall shape of African society extremely amorphous. There has not been a linear development of homogeneous "tribes" in Africa but a continuous rise and decline of heterogeneous societies and polities. Therefore, African "traditional" societies have largely been characterised by mobility, fluidity, flexibility and openness.

These traits of African societies seem to have affected the modalities of resolving everyday micro conflicts pertaining to the allocation of land and resources, succession struggles, family feuds, homicides, and skirmishes with neighbouring societies over livestock and so forth. In such a fluid and flexible society, boundaries of identities tend to be blurred; a person may keep dual ethnic identification with both the original community and the present settlement, switch over between them, or create a new identity platform. People often patiently let time pass before an implicit consensus is reached among diverse members by means of egalitarian, horizontal communication, sometimes called *Palaver* (see Neocosmos, 2016). Innovations brought by outsiders are experimented selectively before they take root as "indigenous." Traditional rituals to heal the wounds of society are constantly reworked to accommodate the needs of the present moment.

As evidenced in the new resettlement areas after the land reform of Zimbabwe, people with diverse backgrounds make use of marriage, burials, totemic ties,

chief's authority and other traditional and modern tools to redefine the notion of autochthony and create a new sense of belonging (Mkodzongi, 2016). In the countryside facing land grabbing, the collective will of villagers prevails and effectively checks the undemocratic deviation of traditional leaders. Although some colonial scholars have marvelled at the sophistication of African contemporary practices and even attempted to codify them (Schapera, 1938), the modalities of conflict resolution and transformation have always been changeable and of an ad-hoc nature in the African peasant world. The experience of South Africa's TRC demonstrates the power of undetermined, open ventures aimed at social healing in Africa.

However, these historically rooted practices have been neglected, distorted and manipulated by colonial administrators, and then, by authoritarian rulers of African states after independence. Today, the relative fluidity of frontiers is making African societies vulnerable to larger-scale conflicts. The institutional vacuum in the periphery of existing nation-states sometimes serves as the hotbed of predatory militant groups, as well as the stage of large-scale land grabbing by global and domestic capital, thereby forcing African peasants to face insecurity over land more than ever before. On the other hand, cages of "modern nations" grafted to onto African soil are giving rise to hierarchical regimes of citizenship and belonging, thereby stoking xenophobic violence, ironically, in the regional centres of capital accumulation such as the African champion of "liberal democracy," South Africa (Neocosmos, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2006).

As eloquently described by Frantz Fanon, in the colonial extremity of the dichotomy of absolute good and absolute evil, violence exerted by the colonised would function as a necessary momentum to liberate them. However, Fanon also believed that such cleansing violence of the masses should be given an appropriate direction by a dedicated leadership that would be willing to work among them. While engaging in the Algerian liberation struggle, he clearly foresaw the rule of a neo-colonial "national bourgeoisie" in independent African states and their hostility to the peasant majority (Fanon, 2004). This alienation seems to have cast a long shadow over contemporary African politics.

Categorising post-colonial African states, Thandika Mkandawire (2008) forcefully argued that the "rentier" states that depend on rents from the mining sector have been more prone to violent conflicts than the "merchant" states that rely on the taxation of peasants. In the former, the wealth tends to concentrate in economic enclaves and cities. Extreme forms of rising inequalities, which are becoming all the more visible today, thrusted the frustrated urban youth into radical and yet ideologically premature rebellion. Then, after being defeated, some of these groups were pushed out of the capital cities, roving and seeking support in the countryside, where they encountered indifference and even hostility among local peasants, whose worldviews were largely unfamiliar to the young rebels. This is considered a major factor behind the atrocities in the countryside, committed by the revolutionaries-turned-rogues who desperately tried to "capture" the peasantry in West and Central Africa (Mkandawire, 2008). It must be noted that the

possibility of repetition of this type of conflict is becoming real, given the convergence of accumulation trajectories with the creation of more enclaves in many more African countries.

The antagonism between the urban and the rural spaces in Africa brings home the importance of learning from everyday practices for settling disputes and transforming conflicts in the world of the peasantry as a part of our collective endeavours to release historically grounded African Potentials. The modalities of micro practices of conflict resolution in the countryside, which have developed in African historical settings, should be nurtured carefully so that lessons can be adapted to other communities, including the space of urban dwellers, through mutual learning. African Potentials ought to address both personal and structural violence by connecting micro village practices with a larger attempt at structural transformation, so as to put an end to capitalist exploitation and super-exploitation and bring about the co-existence and flourishing of multiple communities in Africa.

Our book on African Potentials in the context of Southern Africa presents a powerful set of case studies that sheds light on various aspects of people's experiences with conflict resolution and transformation on the ground, avoiding the hasty generalisation and formalisation of such cases (Moyo & Mine, 2016).

CONCLUSION: FUTURE COLLABORATION WITH REGARD TO AFRICAN POTENTIALS

The "African Potentials" Forums have certainly led to a variety of productive intellectual exchanges not only around the notion of African Potentials but also in terms of provoking discussion on epistemological issues and raising questions on the practical challenges of knowledge production in Africa with a global intellectual context. The Forums have initiated an opening up of many participants to the varied paradigmatic and intellectual practices of non-Western scholarship. There has been a widening of the research and learning vistas for many of those involved, as well as the creation of a space for imagining alternative ways of thinking about Africa's social and political transformations.

The "African Potentials" Forums have also been accompanied by other forms of academic collaboration between Japanese and African network members. This includes the inception of new forms of joint training of post-graduate students, various research exchange visits, the initiation of book publication projects, and the promotion of new publishing fora.

The scope for further deepening these intellectual spaces, exchanges and networking is substantial, but the potential is yet to be fully realised. The investments made so far in the African Potentials Network need to be leveraged immediately in order to broaden their impact on the autonomous and innovative intellectual projects ongoing among African and Japanese scholars and students.

The key initiatives that this combined Forum may consider for further discussion include how to:

1) Establish new ways of strengthening the current networking system, including the reinforcement of key member nodes to enhance intellectual research and training within Africa;

2) Support wider African publishing institutions and new publishing practices, including increasing the translation of works by various network members;

3) Establish and institutionalize a systematic research programme with specified themes over a long-term period (i.e., five years and beyond);

4) Develop a more structured and broader-based joint PhD training and scholarship programme in Japan and Africa;

5) Link and broaden the African Potentials network to connect with other existing South-South and Pan-African networks which members of the Forum are part of; and

6) Imagine new, feasible and adaptive ways of financing autonomous intellectual spaces in Africa and Japan.

NOTE

(1)   The project website is: http://www.africapotential.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en/index.html. The second phase of the project was launched in April 2016: http://www.africapotential. africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp/mms/en/.

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Corresponding Author's Name and Address: Yoichi MINE, *Graduate School of Global Studies, Doshisha University, Karasuma-Kamidachiuri-agaru, Kamigyo-ku, Kyoto 602-0898, JAPAN*.

E-mail: ymine [at] mail.doshisha.ac.jp