The Economy of Affection Revisited: African Development Management in Perspective

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Introduction

A recent issue of *African Recovery,* the United Nations publication dealing with the ongoing economic crisis in Africa, contained two interesting comments on the continent's current predicament. The first article cited a recent monograph on the continent's predicament authored by two prominent economists: Philip Ndegwa and Reginald Green[1]:

> Africa is now a continent which cannot feed itself, meet its external financial obligations or the bill for its essential imports, protect its countries from conflicts, find protective employment for its increasing population, prevent environmental degradation, or exert any meaningful influence in the international decision-making process....A substantial number of countries are now in danger of disintegration, including some which, as recently as the late 1980s, were held up as success stories (Africa Recovery 1995/9/1:8)

The second item contained a background write-up by Jan Pronk, the Netherlands Development Cooperation Minister, of the upcoming Maastricht II Conference, which among other things

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[1] The book, Africa to 2000 and Beyond: Imperative Political and Economic Agenda can be obtained from Mr Ndegwa's office in Nairobi, fax no: (254-2) 33 44 56.

will chart the future activities of the Global Coalition for Africa. It traces the evolution of the international debate on the African crisis in the early 1980s when it was quite polarized:

> Many saw the World Bank as emphasizing prices, markets, the private sector and exports in development programmes while relatively neglecting programmes needed to address human resource development and institution building. The Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity, on the other hand, were regarded as stressing these longer-term objectives and the role of governments in achieving them without fully acknowledging the importance of short-and medium-term macro-economic policies and the role of markets and the private sector. It was not until the end of the 1980s that we saw a 'technical' consensus emerging on the approaches to Africa's problems. The difficulty was how this technical consensus could be converted into a political consensus that embraced the convictions of both African and donor governments. (African Recovery 1995/9/1:18).

The two articles state boldly the contrast between a helpless Africa, on the one hand, and a confident donor community, on the other, which strives for coordination and consensus as the principal means of achieving results on the African continent. So broad is the 'technical consensus' today that the World Bank now directly or indirectly stands on "the critical path" of nearly 75 percent of total capital flows and debt relief to Africa (African Recovery 1995/9/1:8). With the growing political consensus a mentality has emerged in the West which asserts the right of outsiders to supervise political change in Africa.

Some observers, like former President Nyerere, refer to this as a "neocolonial" mentality, but this is not the implications of the new global consensus that we will be mainly concerned with here. Instead, the purpose of this paper is to argue for an alternative way of analyzing the crisis which draws on the empirical realities of Africa rather than deductive models of economic and political reform that may have been successfully applied elsewhere but which as part of the 'technical consensus' have little positive effect on the African continent. This consensus does not only have the effect of limiting the search for policy alternatives but also tends to drive research in specific directions that discourage alternative modes of analysis. Researchers become accomplices in an exercise that in the end has the effect of justifying good money to be thrown after bad and thereby aggravating the crisis.

Needed at this point are bold attempts to break out of the current paradigms and evolve a better understanding of what works and what does not work in Africa. The focus of this research workshop -- the interface between formal and informal institutions -- is a useful starting-point for such an intellectual search. We know from plenty of empirical work that informal aspects of organizations are particularly important in Africa. They are evident in the context of political patronage relations, in economic and social interactions at various levels, and in the context of natural resource management, the specific focus of this workshop. Yet, the 'technical consensus' leads almost exclusively in the direction of formal institutions: how can they be strengthened and their capacity enhanced? The question that we must all ask is whether we are barking up the right tree.

There are many ways to proceed but the challenge is to find a conceptual and theoretical approach which captures the essence of the African condition; which does not shy away from the assumption that Africa is full of historical peculiarities (at least when examined comparatively in the contemporary global context). It may appear a bit presumptuous on my part to suggest that the economy of affection constitutes the way to go. After all, it is not a new approach, nor has it been developed into a full theory. My answer to these reservations is that the economy of affection is by no means the only possible scheme for obtaining a better understanding of what works and what does not in African development management. I do believe, however, that the economy of affection is even more applicable to understanding African issues today than it was when I first launched it as an alternative to liberal and Marxist models of development fifteen years ago (Hyden 1980). The challenge, then, is to see what can be done to develop this approach further and make it a useful tool for empirical research, whether in natural resource management or any other substantive development area. I hope that this paper is at least providing a few steps in that direction.

Criticism of the Concept

In its original tapping, the economy of affection was introduced as the derivative of a peasant mode of production, in which a subsistence orientation prevails. The economy of affection was viewed as a set of informal economic relations embedded in social organizations, typically small units such as communities, small-scale organizations dealing with local issues. It suggested that the key unit of analysis was not class but primary organizations like family, clan, village, tribe or race. As I further developed the concept (see e.g. Hyden 1987a), I also included its more specific political articulations: the personalized nature of power relations expressed in patronage or clientelism. In this sense, the economy of affection was viewed as having both a lateral and a vertical dimension both centered on the reciprocal exchange of values.

The concept has been sufficiently attractive to a number of scholars who have tried to test its usefulness and validity, but there have also been many critics of the concept. It is on them that I concentrate here, mainly with a view to clarifying my own position. The criticism that have stood out as particularly significant are:

- the concept assumes peasants are not rational;
- it overlooks the conflictual dimensions of power relations;
- it does not attend to the issue of gender relations.

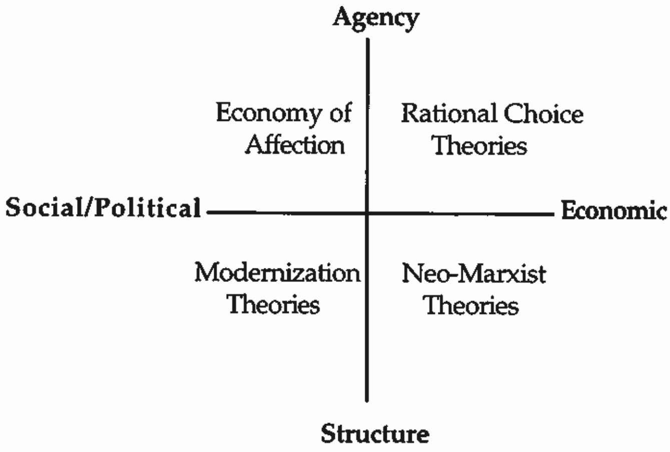
The first kind of criticism must at least in part be understood against the background of the enthusiasm for "the rational peasant" that existed in both academic and policy circles when my book first appeared. The neo-liberal paradigm was on the rise in the early 1980s. The concept of economy of affection was interpreted as a reminiscence of the old modernization paradigm in which peasants were generalized as traditional and backward. This type of criticism came from economists in the World Bank[2] and from academics like Robert Bates (1981) and Nelson Kasfir (1986) who maintained that peasants responded

[2] I still recall a presentation I made on the economy of affection in the World Bank 1981 about the same time as the new strategy document of the Bank -- the so-called Berg Report -- on Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa, after which I was extensively criticized by the economists present for not being enough policy relevant and adhering to what they conceived as a outdated paradigm.

rationally to signals in the market-place. In my reply to this kind of criticism (Hyden 1987b) I have argued that being rational in the market-place does not contradict the assumption about peasants being subsistence-oriented. Peasants will be attracted by higher prices not because they are utilitarian in an individualist sense but because they are overwhelmed by subsistence needs that need to be met. The ultimate consequence, many would argue, is the same: higher levels of production. There are two problems, however, with that argument. One is that it overlooks the labor constraints that afflict peasant households, where the division of labor is strictly confined because of labor migration, especially in the form of children going to school. The second is that it ignores the fact that growth in production has come almost exclusively from increased acreages under cultivation rather than higher levels of productivity on the land. The short-term gains in levels of production stemming from higher prices, therefore, are not necessarily sustainable and giving rise to the assumption that they will continue to grow.

The point I am making with the economy of affection is not that peasants are traditional or backward, but that their rationality is seen in the context not only of what it means to them as economic actors but as social and political actors as well. In this sense, I am closer to Robert Bates' application of rational choice theory to the maximization of power (Bates 1981), but go beyond that in that power is not the only value that is being maximized in the economy of affection. Security is another one, so is respect. Among the theories that have been used to explain development in recent decades, the economy of affection occupies a distinct place, as indicated in the figure below:

Figure 1: Different approaches to the study of African development



The economy of affection, like rational choice theories, emphasizes agency, but differs from the latter in that the maximization of values is conceived not in individualist or material terms only but in terms of how communal relations are being affected by the exchange of a broader set of values that goes beyond economics. As Figure 1 indicates, the economic affection differs from the structuralist theories that dominated in the 1960s and 1970s, but shares with modernization theory the notion that social and political values may serve as independent variables.

The second type of criticism has come mainly from those who view politics and development as zero-sum games, where winner takes all and loser gets nothing. Cliffe (1987) and Williams (1987) have expressed this critique from what is essentially a materialist perspective. Lemarchand (1991) has argued that the economy of affection implies the notion of "merrie Africa", a somewhat derogatory image of life on the continent that prevailed in colonial days. Disaffection, he argues, is as common as affection in Africa, using the cases of Rwanda and Burundi to prove his point.

The point I am making is not that affection is the sole empirical manifestation of social and economic life in Africa but that investment in social relations is the dominant logic guiding this life. People in Africa have rights over other human beings in ways that make economic relations much more embedded in the social fabric than the case is elsewhere. To be sure, this phenomenon has been prevalent in other places too but is not as prevalent in the contemporary context there as it is in Africa. One of the fundamental characteristics of the economy of affection is the great variety of ways in which rights-in-persons can be acquired. Kopytoff (1987) argues that the African frontier, unlike the American where typically independent individuals and small nuclear families engaged in an economic and technological entrepreneurship, is characterized by social and political entrepreneurship aimed at achieving independence, favorable terms of dependence, acquiring adherents, and making alliances. Another prominent anthropologist makes a similar point when he maintains that in Africa "chiefship tended to be over people rather than over land; these a leader had to try to attract as well as contain" (Goody 1971:30ff).

Following from this is the point that in the economy of affection, the private realm is hegemonic. In fact, no deliberate separation of public from private has taken place in this context. The result is that secrecy and informality take precedence over transparency and formality; personal and shortterm gains over collective and longterm ones. Transactions and exchanges are typically personalized, embedded in bilateral relations that can only be sustained as long as the two parties to the exchange remain on good *personal* terms with each other. That is why the concept of economy of affection makes sense.

Because there is no public realm -- and authority relations in society are personalized -- society is very fragile. Both capitalism and socialism rely on an ideology that justifies adherence to norms that are independent of particular actors. Both demand of each individual a distinct behavior in the public which adheres to certain institutionalized norms about what is good or bad, right or wrong. The economy of affection lacks this kind of universalizing norms. Colonialism was an attempt to incorporate African societies into this mode of thinking and behaving, but it failed largely because of its own shortcomings in handling this educational "mission". Yet, at independence, many Africans had become believers in either capitalism or socialism. This fact notwithstanding, the post-colonial era has been characterized by the gradual erosion of the belief in the separation of private and public. Instead, African societies have largely returned to forms of rule that take their lead from the economy of affection rather than capitalism or socialism. The prevalence of patrimonialism is testimony to this trend.

The risks associated with this tendency can be seen in the growing number of African societies that are disintegrating or being on the brink of doing so. The combination of a grave economic crisis and political pluralism becomes particularly threatening to societies where secular beliefs in the virtue of a public realm where transactions among individuals can take place without being dependent on the personal whims of any one of them. It is only possible to fully understand how people of the same ethnic group in Rwanda and Burundi can butcher each other to death without any restraint in the light of a model of analysis which starts from the premise that the private prevails over the public, the parochial over the universal.[3]

The third criticism focuses on the absence of a gender component in the economy of affection. Here the argument is that the marginalization of women is not adequately recognized in spite of the specific focus on the household or family unit in the model. Staudt (1987) makes the point that the problem with women in agriculture in Africa is not that they are uncaptured but that they are not provided incentives to produce more or play a greater role in the economy. Peters (1991) points out that my work fails to explore various indigenous methods used by women to negotiate with their husbands the "returns" to their work and the ways women's lives have been fundamentally affected by actions of the state.

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[3] I disagree with observers like my colleague, Rene Lemarchand, who (understandably out of moral outrage) maintains that the killings of Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994 was no different from what the Nazis did to the Jews. This argument overlooks the fact that this was a wanton butchery carried out without any scientific or systematic pretensions other than getting rid of any one -- elderly people, women and children included --who was a Tutsi or who was seen as interested in achieving some form of equilibirum in the relations between the two distinct social groups -- Tutsis and Hutus -- forming the same ethnic and cultural community.

This point is valid to the extent that I have myself not engaged in a gender analysis, but that does not necessarily mean that the model could not incorporate it. Because embedded social exchanges are at the very heart of male-female relations within African households, there is plenty of room within the model to deal with precisely this issue, because it is also a core concept in the model. State actions are important to understand negotiated relations between husband and wife, patron and client, but such actions are only conditioning these exchanges or negotiations, not necessarily changing their character. The remarkable thing about Africa is the relative stability of informal relations and institutions in the context of changing state policies. Neither state-centered nor market-based approaches to development have really changed the basic logic of societal reproduction in Africa. This is the root of the problem of trying to develop Africa with the help of models borrowed from other areas of the world, be that the West or the East.

The Economy Affection and the Public Realm

The biggest challenge to scholarship on Africa is that while there is a definitely distinct logic to the reproduction of society, there is no abstract system within which everything is taking place. Because personalized relations prevail there is no "system" independent of the actors. To put it differently, rules do not exist separate from persons. It took about two decades before the rules that guide state bureaucracy had been undermined by the successful Africanization of the continent's politics. What in many places was perceived as a colonial legacy was being challenged at the national policy-making level as well as by individual administrators who felt that the rules stood in the way of their ambition to achieve personal objectives such as hiring a relative, punishing a subordinate, or dishing out favors to client groups that had deprecated themselves.

What happened to bureaucracy is now happening to market. Structural adjustment policies have taken away some of the controls at the disposal of politicians and administrators (although many do still exist). The assumption in policy circles supporting these reforms is that "the hidden hand" of the market will reduce corrupt and arbitrary behavior. What we are increasingly witnessing, however, is the permeation of the market by the economy of affection. The market is becoming not only segmented according to who you are (rich or poor, insider or outsider, man or woman) but also "corrupted" by social investments in other individuals who can help a person to achieve his or her personal goals.

This is not to suggest that rules are absent in African societies. They are there, but what has emerged in other societies as a public realm subjected to certain rules that cannot be challenged without punishment is largely absent. To the extent that it exists, it is in the full shadow of the private realm. The notion of a system in which acts are interdependent and subject to certain principles that transcend personal interests is not a very helpful tool for analysis, leave alone policy action. "System" implies interdependence and the notion that certain policy interventions can be made which are both plannable and feasible. These principles are inherent in virtually all projects that outside organizations, non-governmental as well as governmental, try to implement in Africa. Their failure cannot be blamed on any one party to this exercise but rather on the lack of fit between the assumptions underlying policy design and the social logic guiding those implementing these policies. This can be rectified in two ways: the Africans can be converted to the same ideas as those designing projects or project designers can adjust their approach to incorporate the social realities of the African continent. For three or so decades now, the world has tried the first of these approaches but with very limited success. There is little to show for all the money that has been pumped into Africa in the name of development. It is only more recently that participatory approaches have been introduced that try to build on local values and institutions. Even these approaches, however, are often flawed because they fail to recognize the weakness, if not total absence, of a public realm the values of which individuals are committed to. Non-governmental organizations experience the same problems as government agencies have for decades: that individuals are in it for themselves rather than the public cause for which the organization works.

It is of course true that individual aspirations and interests have to merge with public interests in any organization if it wishes to succeed. This lesson is well known from organizational experience in Western societies as well as elsewhere. The difference, however, is that Western society -- and most societies in other regions of the world -- have at their disposal for the organization's mission not only monetary incentives to influence individual behavior but also moral and coercive means. This is what the existence of civic values based on the notion of rights and obligations that transcend the boundaries of primary social organizations provides. That is also the essence of what I refer to here as the "public realm".

Peter Ekeh, the Nigerian sociologist, is probably the foremost analyst of the issues discussed here. In several publications dating back twenty years (e.g. Ekeh 1975 and 1994), he has argued that in Africa there are two public realms: one civic, the other primordial. Ekeh makes several important points with regard to these two public domains. The first is that the historical differentiation between the two can be traced all the way back to the days of the slave trade. Starting with the ravages of the slave trade, African states were separated from societal representations, particularly their kinship structures, as most of them became dependent on European merchant capitalism. Although the succeeding colonial state was not antagonistic toward kinship structures, the individual was viciously slighted and called such disparaging names as "primitive" and "uncivilized". The second point is that colonialism, in spite of -- or maybe because of -- its demeaning character it provided the individual with a hospitable atmosphere for actively developing his own political agenda within the existing kinship networks, leading to the emergence of the primordial public realm. This domain, in which individuals rights and obligations are typically adhered to, functions alongside the formal, state-defined civic public realm. The third point is that the latter realm is stronger than the former and, if anything, has grown even stronger in the post-colonial era. For example, while an individual finds it right to make contributions to local causes defined as obligations within the primordial public realm, the same person finds state taxation, whether central or local, illegitimate because the citizenship meaning of taxation in terms of reciprocity is very weak. The fourth point is that the status of an individual in one realm tends to be independent of his or her status in the other. For example, a man can be insignificant in the reckoning of the state and yet enjoy enormous prestige in the primordial public. But there are also those who operate in both publics, switching from moral actions in the primordial public to amoral postures in the civic public.

This differentiation between two publics is crucial to our understanding of Africa's current predicament. It implies that what is right or wrong, legitimate or illegitimate, is defined in very different ways than it is in most other places where state and society have developed in an organic fashion and where, therefore, citizenship rights and obligations are defined in a straightforward manner. In these latter places, the moral codes of society have been translated into rules and regulations that are typically adhered to as long as the procedures of approving them have not been violated. In Africa, however, the legitimate rules and regulations tend to be located in the primordial public because the state was imposed by an outside force on top of individual African societies. There is no loyalty to the state, therefore, a phenomenon which in colonial days led to independence and liberation struggles but which in the post-colonial period has caused a progressive delegitimization of the state.

The official policies that the technical and now also political consensus of the donor community gives rise to imply that economic and political reforms will reduce the conflict between these two publics, because the more the market is able to allocate public resources the fewer the opportunities are for individual actors to distort their use. What advocates of the neo-liberal and democratic agenda tend to overlook, however, is that the market is not necessarily always that "hidden" or objective mechanism of resource allocation assumed in the textbooks. Because of the strength of the economy of affection, the market economy has become increasingly embedded in the social fabric of African society, reflecting its concern with investments in the rights and obligations of people. Affection or disaffection, success or failure, the indigenous logic of societal reproduction is distorting the operations of the market along the same lines as it has subverted government action. Personal, kinship or community considerations have come to prevail. This is evident in many different contexts, e.g. privatization of public enterprises, dismissal of superfluous state employees, provision of credit, and pricing of commodities.

The issue here, then, is that what Western society identifies as the difference between private and public realms is not perceived in the same way in the economy of affection. The latter provides legitimation for a whole host of rights and obligations which in the individualist conception of rights and duties associated with the Western tradition are treated as subordinate to those of the public realm. For example, the simple but important principle in the Judaeo-Christian conception of the civic public never to do anything to some one else that you would not do to yourself is a key notion in the primordial public in Africa but not at all extended to the civic public there. The United States of America as a society of immigrants relies almost exclusively on the adherence of a vibrant civic public in which rights and obligations are constantly contested in the judicial and political arena. That is why allegiance to the flag (the symbol) and the constitution (the substance) is so much more important to Americans than it is to Europeans where (with some exceptions) the state has emerged as representative of the civic public following contestations between social classes rather than immigrant groups defined by ethnicity or race. The state in European society has typically been embedded in community relations and emerged as an indigenous creation while in the U.S. the civic public has been defined in abstraction to fit the anticipated needs of a diverse society of immigrants.

None of these historical models, however, applies to Africa, yet, they tend to shape the prescrip-tions that are being transferred to African societies for purposes of better development management or governance. No amount of efforts at social or political engineering will succeed in Africa as long as policy analysts fail to recognize that (a) there is no such thing as a "system" that operates according to a bureaucratic or market logic, and (b) that the conventional distinction between public and private domains for the identification of rights and obligations does not apply to African society. Scholarly analysis, therefore, becomes relevant and useful only if it transcends the boundaries of conventional Western theories of development management.

The Economy of Affection and Natural Resource Management

This last section will attempt to identify some of the implications that follow from adopting an economy of affection approach to the study of natural resource management. I expect that the sections above have provided enough evidence that informal relations matter and that in the African context they tend to prevail to such an extent that the logic of social action is to be found there rather than in the context of formal institutions. We need to approach the study of African society, therefore, from what might be termed the "backdoor", not the portal entrance of formal institutions. This makes the task more difficult but also more intriguing and challenging for scholarship. The rest of this paper will identify four issues which have implications for the subject of this conference: formal and informal institutions in natural resource management. They are: (1) the boundaries of common property systems; (2) the nature of the natural resource; (3) the gender factor; and, (4) the composition of the managing group.

A. System boundaries. I have suggested above that there is no system in African society, only a social logic that guides human interaction at a personal level. This point needs to be modified if we move from the macro to the micro level. There are systems in place which have been developed by specific communities or ethnic groups which to this day have survived the influence of both the colonial and post-colonial state and the market economy. We know that common property systems exist in many African societies, both nomadic and sedentary. Specific rules apply to the management of these resources. These rules are generally internalized by members of the communities concerned. Thus, there is a tradition of management of common property systems in many African societies that provides the foundation for social action in the contemporary context. The Mossi of Burkina Faso is a case in point. It is no coincidence that some of the strongest indigenous non-governmental organizations, e.g. the *Naam* movement, which is derived from indigenous principles of organization based on kinship and genealogy. This type of organization, however, is often portrayed by political leaders as divisive because they are confined to specific ethnic communities in which the organizational principle is known. Many governments naturally end up discouraging such organizations in favor of organizational networks over which they have direct personal control through the use of political patronage. Thus, even if African governments often in a populist fashion advocate indigenous over foreign values and institutions, political reality in the context of an economy of affection often demands rejection of these very things. A similar controversy over how far local values and institutions are positive to development has taken place in Uganda, where the restoration of the monarchy in Buganda, Bunyoro and Toro in the past two years has led to calls for greater recognition at the national level of the strength of local institutions associated with the kingdoms rather than the secular central government.

The lack of fit between state and society that is so prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa calls for greater attention to institutions evolving from society rather than state. Yet, the political realities of a society where the values of the primordial public reign demand a top-down approach where leaders are allowed to dispense patronage as means of holding together the nation-state as constituted in colonial times. What I am getting at here is the fact that not only is the lack of fit between the colonial state and African society a problem. So is the relationship between central and local institutions wherever personalized patronage politics exists. In fact, instead of encouraging the use of local institutions for managing natural resources, the patrimonialist form of politics associated with the economy of affection tends to undermine these local institutions. Somalia is a case in point. That country's economy is extensively dependent on effective management of the country's fragile natural resource base. Much of that had been achieved in times when the nomads were allowed to attend to this task following their own practical knowledge. The full use of indigenous knowledge for natural resource management, however, was reduced by the way politics was allowed to interfere, especially during the dictatorial rule of Siad Barre. The state became a burden around the neck of those who depended on flexibility and autonomy to manage their livelihoods. It is ironical that only after the breakdown of the Somali state were nomads in the Ogaden able to return to a more normal life and secure their livelihood through adherence to traditional methods of natural resource management (Hussein Adam, personal communication, January 8, 1995). In terms of understanding the problems of achieving improved natural resource management in sub-Saharan Africa, therefore, we can formulate our first hypothesis:

1. The more the values of the primordial public are allowed to influence politics at the national level, the more likely that institutions associated with specific local communities will be discouraged from playing an autonomous role in managing natural resources.

Management of common property systems poses special challenges in the African context because where the boundaries of such systems go make a big difference. Most common property systems are confined to specific local areas. Wherever the boundaries of these systems fall within the territory of one community, and therefore one culture, the probability is great that tending land and other natural resources can be achieved through existing indigenous methods and institutions.

The situation is likely to be different, however, if the common property system is shared by more than one community. Wherever not only different group interests but also different community values come into conflict with each other, the more difficult it is to evolve a formula for natural resource management that satisfies all parties involved. For example, the management of a river system which is shared by several communities is very difficult because no common tradition has evolved for doing this. In the context of Asian water management systems, two factors seemed to have facilitated a solution to this problem: state direction and/or a shared religion and culture. These factors are typically absent in the African context making the task of finding solutions to the management of common property systems more difficult. A second hypothesis, therefore, can be formulated along the following lines:

2. The probability of evolving successful institutions for managing common property systems is greater wherever these systems are confined to one community sharing a similar cultural tradition.

B. <u>Nature of natural resources</u>. It is important in the African context to differentiate between different kinds of natural resources, because their very nature tends to have a direct effect on the possibilities of successful management. I have suggested above that the economy of affection is guided by a subsistence orientation. In societies where smallholder peasant households dominate without being subjugated to the control by other groups or classes in society, the principal source of income is what is being produced on the family farm and from off-farm sources to supplement the little that the land yields. In this respect, peasants across wide areas of Africa are the same, although some may be more successful than others in making a livelihood out of these poor circumstances. The main point here, however, is that this kind of situation fosters a greater preoccupation with subsistence needs than the case is in other societies where wage earning or other forms of economic dependencies exist. Fending for oneself, i.e. one's own household, is a principle of honor in these societies and it is only natural, therefore, that actors in the economy of affection prioritize subsistence needs, whether they are met on the family farm or through earning income elsewhere. Whatever is gained goes not for capital accumulation but for domestic consumption.

Natural resources that are necessary for the successful pursuit of local livelihoods, i.e. which are crucial for subsisting, are likely to get highest priority in African societies. For instance, open lands that are used for grazing cattle or planting seasonal crops are likely to be protected very carefully by local communities. The same is not necessarily true for natural resources that have a more distant effect on the lives of people in these communities. For example, tree-planting may be more difficult to promote in rural areas of Africa unless people earn money from it or doing it can be shown to have an immediate positive effect on the task of meeting the subsistence needs of individual households. Wildlife protection may be even more distant and it has proved to be particularly difficult to relate this objective to the interests of local communities. One reason why this appears to have been so problematic is that schemes such as CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe have relied primarily on formal local government institutions in which local people have little trust and whose agenda is far removed from the day-to-day needs of rural households. The next hypothesis can be formulated in the following way:

> 3. The greater the importance of a given natural resource to the subsistence needs of a local community, the greater the

probability that this resource will be effectively managed.

C.The gender factor. Given the research that has been done on the division of labor within African households and the responsibilities men and women respectively have for satisfying the needs of the household, it is increasingly clear that women play a particularly important role in virtually all communities in sub-Saharan Africa. Although there are some places where women as in most Arab countries are being kept away from menial tasks in the open, Muslim women in Africa typically work like any other women in meeting subsistence needs whether it is on the land or in trade. The subsistence orientation overshadows the principles of religion. Men readily accept this prioritization because without it they would have to work much harder and even so the needs of the households might not be met. It is already a well established fact of life in African societies that women are particularly active in ensuring the household's subsistence needs are being met. In addition to working on their own, women often unite in small groups to complement household incomes. Rotating savings and credit groups following informal rules exist throughout the continent. Work groups cultivating additional crops on a communal basis are also common. Particularly significant about these efforts is that mutual trust is much more developed among women than among men. While the monetization of the economy, especially in recent years, appears to have had the effect of subverting organizations dominated by men, women's organizations have often been more closely bound together by this factor. For example, informal sector enterprises tend to be one-person entities when initiated by men, but group efforts when started by women. To some extent, this may be the effect of shortage of financial capital among women, but that is usually not the only reason. The sense of reciprocal action appears to be more deeply entrenched in the minds of women than among men. Women are simply superior to men in the context of the economy of affection to generate social capital with which projects can be pursued.

Women, therefore, stand a better chance of achieving results at least as long as their common effort is related to objectives associated with meeting the households' subsistence needs. This is true as much for market-based activities as it is for natural resource management. The opposite is also likely to be the case:

the less closely associated the task of women's work is to satisfying basic household needs, the more likely women's organizations will face the same problems as those affecting male-dominated entities, e.g. political rivalry based on patronage, inefficient management, and poor motivation.

Small organizations tend to succeed more often because satisfying the subsistence needs is more easily achieved by groups of few people. The reason why outside visitors to Africa tend to be so impressed by what they see in terms of organized efforts, especially by women, at the village level is that these organizations are small, but also that they are driven by a strong need to ensure that subsistence needs are being adequately met. The next hypothesis is presented in the light of this point:

> 4. The greater the involvement by women in organizations charged with managing natural resources that bear directly on household subsistence needs, the greater the probability that these organizations will succeed in achieving their objectives.

D. Composition of organization. The impression may have been gathered from the account above that other values than those associated with the economy of affection are absent in Africa. Such a crude generalization is not intended. Clearly there are groups of actors who by virtue of their economic position are closely tied into the global capitalist economy and as such participate on its terms. These people have opted for a different social logic than the majority and constitute a group (or class) of its own. They may be variably described as entrepreneurs, capitalists or exploiters, but the point is that they devote most of their time to accumulate capital not for the sake of subsistence consumption but for the purpose of building their own capital base. The rise of this group of individuals must be attributed largely to the economic reforms in recent years that have made capital accumulation a legitimate pursuit. Without economic liberalization it would have been virtually impossible for this group to emerge in ways that are in accordance with the laws of the land.

The question that interests us here is what difference this group may make to the task of improving natural resource management in Africa. On the one hand, these persons are usually in a hurry to make money and may have little sympathy for the objective of conserving nature, especially if it entails doing it in collaboration with others. On the other hand, this group is one of the few in African countries that are plugged into global networks, through which ideas such as conservation or improved natural resource management circulate. Their exposure to these values and the fact that many of them work in partnership with corporate entities elsewhere in the world provides at least the opportunity for conservation ideas to permeate public discourse in these countries. Their awareness of the outside world and values that transcend the economy of affection was certainly a major finding in interviews I carried out among different groups of people in Tanzania in 1990 (Hyden 1994).

I do not suggest that capitalist entrepreneurs constitute the best hope for improved natural resource management, but I am concerned that researchers do not enter the field with a closed mind on this issue. In societies, where the economy of affection prevails, the challenges of improvement are different than elsewhere because, as I have discussed above, the primordial public limits the options available for doing anything in this regard at a level above the local. The group of individuals who has independent wealth and does not need to engage in patronage politics is hypothetically best placed to be the carrier of more cosmopolitan values associated with the task of natural resource management. They have a vested interest in such an approach not because it directly affects their livelihoods as the case is with women operating in the economy of affection but because it is in their longterm interest to protect natural resources which can be exploited -- and managed -- by domestic forces in the future. This is likely to be the only group in these societies which has such a vision.

The implications of this argument, therefore, is that national policy on conservation and development issues will be difficult to sustain in African societies unless they develop groups of entrepreneurs who are free from the shackles of patronage politics and the social logic of the economy of affection. African governments will not become policy governments, i.e. concerned with the fate of substantive issues, unless they are made up of individuals who stand free of the primordial pressures lodged in the economy of affection. It is primarily in such a context that rules will be formulated which stand above individual actors and constrain social action in ways that are supportive of abstract objectives such as conservation of the national endowment of resources. It is only in these circumstances that the civic public may effectively begin to compete with the primordial public. I am suggesting, therefore, that in addition to women who are likely to play the greatest role at the micro level, the best placed carriers of conservation policies in Africa may well be those which traditionally are associated mainly with exploitation of, not conservation of natural resources. The last hypothesis for further studies may be formulated as follows:

> 5. The greater the social and political power of groups with independent wealth, the greater the chances are that substantive policy debates on issues of conservation and development will take place and shape national strategies on this subject.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that little scholarly progress will be made if research on the issues of conservation and development does not consider the historical peculiarities of the African condition, notably the predominance of informal relations over formal ones due to the widespread presence of an economy of affection. If anything, this type of economy has gained in strength in the past two decades. Policies aimed at economic and political reform have not altered its supremacy only changed the conditions under which it operates. In these circumstances, means of managing natural resources are most effective when they are small-scale and tied to meeting subsistence needs within individual households. The implication is that a decentralized set-up in which non-governmental organizations play a leading role is likely to be the most appropriate institutional approach. The success of these NGOs, however, depends very much on their ability to work with small groups of women (or others) without forcing them into the straightjacket of their own formalities. At the same time, they must be capable of nudging these groups along in ways that make it possible for these members of the primordial public to learn about alternatives to the way they do things. This is a social rather than a technical task, implying that flexibility and diversity in approach may be preferable to the current situation where international actors try to impose the solutions that have emerged as priorities within the technical and political consensus that now hegemonically reigns at the global level.

I have also argued that African societies need groups of individuals who can take an independent stand vis-a-vis the international community and come up with strategies and policies that make sense at the national level. Natural resource management at the local level is important but it won't add up to much unless there is a policy that is internalized by groups in society ready to defend and develop it. That is why private entrepreneurs, in addition to rural women, are likely to have a particularly important role in achieving the objective of improved natural resource management in situations where informal networks continue to outwit the logic of formal structures, whether market or state based.

In making the case for the potential usefulness of the concept of economy of affection, this paper is not providing conclusive answers to the many questions touched upon above. It rather poses questions that may be useful in further research. The hypotheses listed above, in all their tentativeness, suggest some ways along which research in this field may proceed in the future.

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