

Is there a French Touch to African Studies?

Céline Thiriot

Les Afriques dans le Monde, Université de Bordeaux, France

Introduction

France and Africa have a long common history, for better or for worse. African Studies in the French academic and research system are a link to this history. It means that French African Studies are anything but neutral. On the contrary, they have been built in an act of militancy (a “fight” according to Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2002), in order to exit the “colonial library” (Mudimbe 1988) inherited from the colonial period and after. This evolution is embodied in the shift from ‘Africanism’ to ‘African Studies’. In France, the first and oldest organization is the *Société des africanistes*, which has existed since 1930. However, in 2006, a second organization was created by the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), at first as an RTP (*Réseau thématique prioritaire*, Priority thematic network) institutionalized in 2014 as the *Groupement d'intérêt scientifique (GIS*, Scientific interest group) *études africaines en France*, African Studies in France.¹ Each of them embodies two different moments and conceptions of African Studies. The GIS is now a network of 23 research centres, belonging to 18 French institutions (universities, CNRS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ research centres,² IRD³). It embodies the new African Studies in France, but the very idea

¹ The Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) is the major organization for public research in France. For more information, see *Études Africaines en France* 2019.

² The French Ministry for Foreign Affairs has several UMIFRE (*Unités Mixtes des Instituts français de Recherche à l'Étranger*), seven of which are in Africa. See *Unités Mixtes des Instituts français de Recherche à l'Étranger* 2015.

³ IRD (*Institut de Recherche pour le Développement*) is the former ORSTOM, with several research units based in African countries. For more information, see *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement France* 2019a and *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement France* 2019b.

of Area Studies is still hotly debated within French academia. Having the advantage of lending visibility to our 'exotic fields,' it can give the wrong idea of a homogeneity. Beside the *GIS études africaines*, the CNRS has supported the creation of other GIS in Area Studies.⁴ Speaking of Area Studies is clearly political and instrumental (Bayart 2016), especially after 2001, when most of those countries started to be perceived as a possible threat to northern countries. This continues to be the case now, in the migrant crisis affecting European countries. French academics are not naïve; even though they benefit from this 'Area Studies fashion,' they do not accept it as such, as the new research projects developed clearly prove.

A survey of the last decades in French African Studies suggests a shift in the dominant paradigms, fields, and topics, which will be discussed in the first part of the article. The data and graphics presented in this article are drawn from the first *Livre blanc sur les études africaines en France* ('White book on African Studies in France'), published in 2016 (*GIS études africaines* 2016; here and in the following cited as *Livre Blanc*). Nowadays, African Studies are surfing the strong wave of the revival of Area Studies in France, but this should not hide the challenges at the current juncture, which will be the focus of the second part of the article.

General Trends and Evolution in African Studies in France

The *GIS Etudes Africaines en France* has published the *Livre Blanc* in 2016. The data and quantitative analysis presented here have been produced by colleagues from Nice: Jocelyne Streiff-Fénart, under the supervision of Pierre Boilley, the director of the network.⁵

Global Trends

Several factors have shaped and are still shaping the evolution and the global trends of African Studies in France. First, the national – meaning colonial – tradition has a strong influence on the perception of the geographical area. For a long time, French academics did, for the most

⁴ These are the GIS Moyen Orient-Mondes musulmans, GIS Études asiatiques, Institut des Amériques.

⁵ For details on who did this quantitative analysis and how it was done, please refer to *Livre Blanc* 2016: 72 and 108-115. Part of their analysis was used to create Figures 1-6.

part, consider the former French colonies, with a strong focus on North Africa. African Studies have been influenced by intellectual modes, and by political issues (French perspectives and interest in African political issues). The second factor is the evolution of scientific disciplines, of their topics, and theoretical backgrounds. The structure of the French academic system and the evolution of institutions and funding opportunities has been and still are determinant. Within those conditions, French academics have been engaged in building a militant and independent science.

Roughly speaking, one can identify four different periods. The first 'Africanism' was a colonial one. The 'colonial library' (Mudimbe 1988) of Africanism consisted of studies of the African populations made for – and often by – French administrators. Their purpose was to find a way of understanding African societies in order to help the colonial administration to establish its control. The colonial Africanism consisted mainly of ethno-geographic and law studies, with the main interest being ruling and managing African populations. Then the anthropologic perspective began to ask questions differently, within the 'colonial situation' identified by Georges Balandier (Balandier 2002). Questions of power, of domination, and legacy began to be asked. The 1950s-1960s saw the emergence of modern Africanism, with Balandier as the father (Jewsiewicki 2002). Step by step, African Studies have been built by questioning this 'original sin' of colonialism. The 1970s-1980s saw the emergence of African Studies, with different disciplines building contemporary and modern perspectives on Africa. The period was highly ideological. Researchers in anthropology, history, or geography chose to study Africa with a militant spirit. After the colonization and the decolonization fights, choosing to work on Africa was 'a fight.' Marxism was a strong ideology for that, as well as Dependency theory. This explains why African Studies have always had strong ties with the economy. Historians and anthropologists have been studying inequalities, social domination, power confiscation, etc. This was possible thanks to disciplinary (R)evolutions. An important turn came with *L'École des Annales* and in the 1970s with Coquery-Vidrovitch. Political sciences were strongly oriented in the 1980s with the *politique par le bas* ("politics from the grassroots") perspective supported by François Bayart, Christian Coulon, Denis-Constant Martin and the review *Politique Africaine*. Politically, there was hope for change in 1981, with the election of the first socialist president in France, François Mitterrand. His Minister for Development, Jean-Pierre Cot, wanted

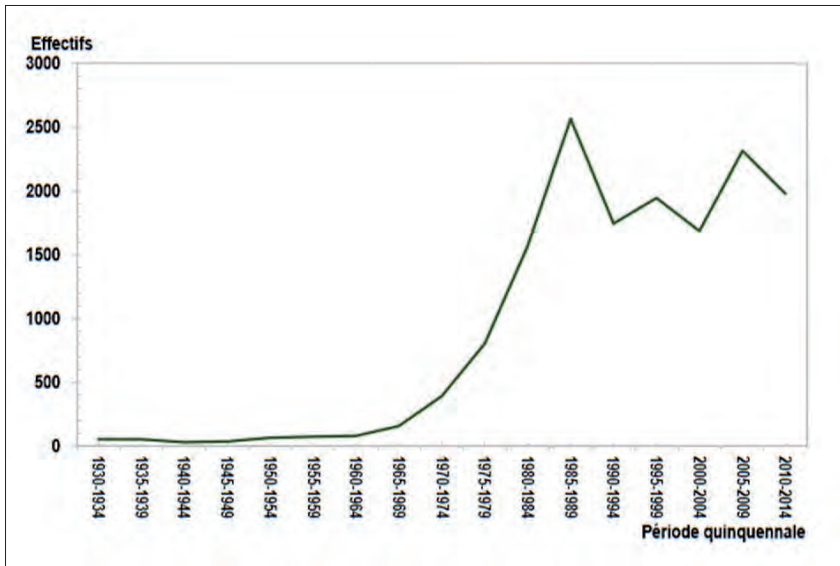


Figure 1: Evolution of the number of theses since 1930 (*Livre Blanc*: 74)

to change French-African relations. Many French scholars believed in him and counselled him. Unfortunately, Cot resigned after only two years, under pressure from some African autocrats. Unfortunately, too, the 1990s and 2000s were lost decades for African Studies in France. At that time, Africa as a field of study had little, if any, legitimacy in most of the disciplines, with some exceptions. Africa as a field of study was more central in geography, anthropology, and history. But to be considered as a *true* political scientist or as a *true* economist, you were not supposed to mention African examples and experiments. There was almost no recruitment of specialists for Africa then. The political context is another explanatory factor. With the end of cold war, the African continent lost any strategic interest.

The current period can be qualified as renewal of African Studies. The leading French research institutions proved to have a strong commitment in supporting the recruitment of new researchers and the funding of research programs. However, this renewal is occurring in a quite competitive context, with the emergence of Post-colonial and Global studies (Byfield 2006: 57). The central issue for African Studies nowadays is to consider African fields as areas where theory can be developed, and not only transposed.

PhD Theses on Africa in France

The evolution of PhD theses (data from 1930 to 2014) reflects the evolution of African Studies in France. One specificity of French African Studies is the multiple disciplines that investigate African societies and topics. Figure 1 shows the evolution of the number of theses on Africa between 1930 and 2014.

The number of theses increased significantly after independence. One reason for that is the easier access of African students to graduate studies compared with the colonial period. Another reason might be the new interest in studying African independent states facing so many challenges, like democracy, development, ethnicity, etc. Figure 2 shows the distribution of theses on Africa according to academic disciplines, with cumulative figures.

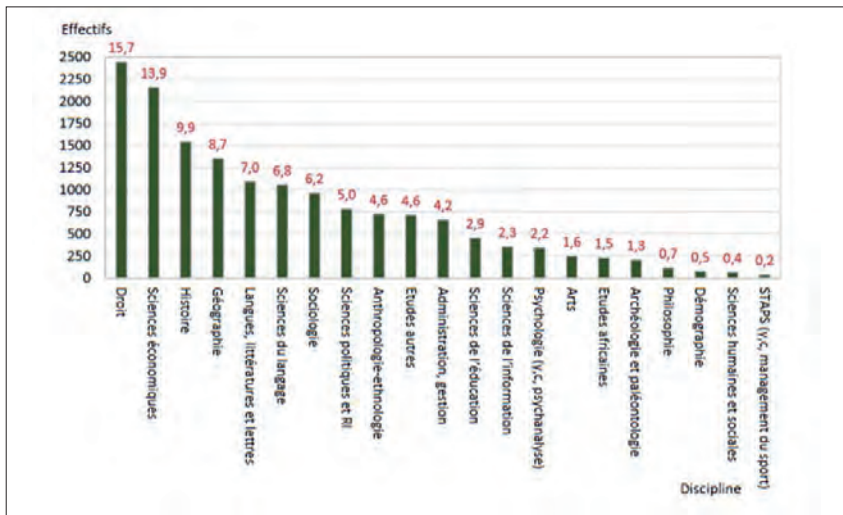


Figure 2: Disciplines of theses, numbers, and percentages (*Livre Blanc*: 76)

Of course, this reflects history and the importance of the respective disciplines, as law and languages were placed first. Therefore, it is not surprising that their presence is the most important in terms of quantity over the whole period. Generally, the distribution reflects the overall balance between disciplines in French universities, except maybe for anthropology, for which Africa is the main field. Figure 3 shows the changing distribution of disciplines of theses on Africa more clearly.

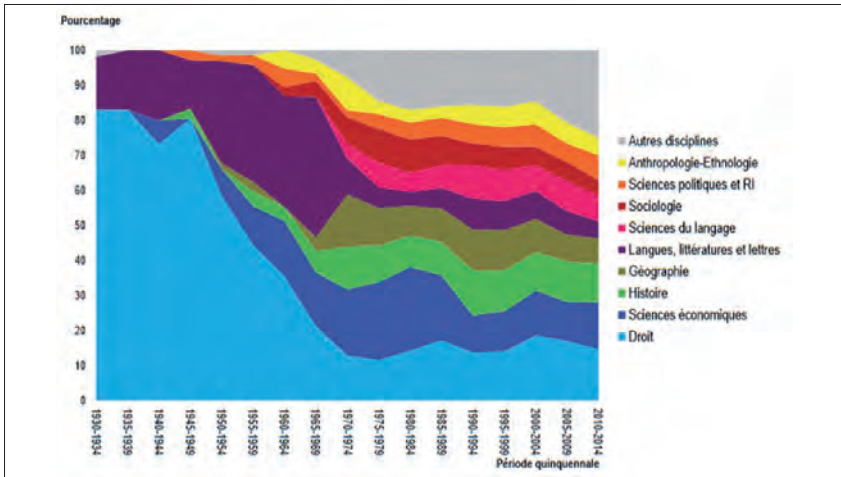


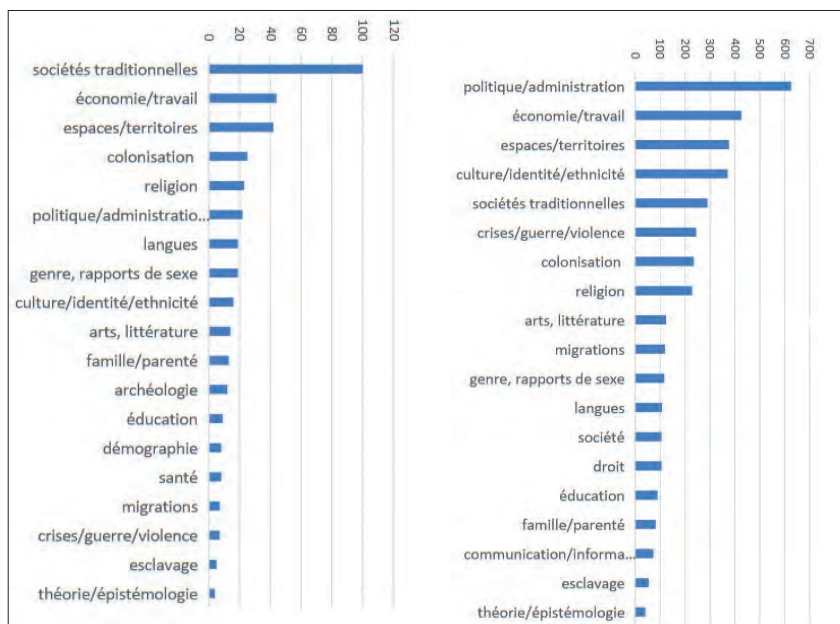
Figure 3: Evolution of the most represented disciplines (excluding theses in general categories such as ‘African Studies,’ ‘human and social science’) (*Livre Blanc*: 78)

Law and linguistics are dominant up to 1970. After 1970, African fields and problems became the field of studies by new or renewed disciplines, such as economy, history, geography, and political sciences.

Articles published on Africa in France

The comparison of the detailed lists of the topics developed in scientific publications between 1960-1970 (Figure 4, on the left) and 2000-2013 (Figure 5, on the right) is of greater interest. In both periods, some topics remain central, such as the economy, labor, or territorial studies. However, between the first and the second period, other topics have gained increased visibility, such as politics, public administration (seven percent of the publications in the 1st period, 43 percent in the second one), culture, identity, and ethnicity. Some topics have literally emerged somewhere in the time between the two periods under review like communication, sexuality, and social troubles. On the other hand, some topics have quite disappeared. Those ‘has-been’ topics are ethnic monographies, the tradition/modernity opposition, traditional societies, or kinship.

The *Livre Blanc* publishes a state of research for each discipline. It proves how current research interests in French African Studies are a perfect reflection of the importance of understanding the burning issues on the continent in today’s world. To avoid embarrassing lapses, we are



Figures 4 and 5: Number of articles by topics 1960-1970 and 2000-2013
(*Livre Blanc*: 103-104)

not going to mention any names here, but only topics and laboratories. There is a strong interest in religions, religious engagements, and dynamics, from the local to the most global (transnational) perspective. Africa is without any doubt a very religious continent. Religion is the main door for political and social participation. Political Islam is a powerful destabilizing factor in many countries (Al-Qaïda au Maghreb/Al-Qaïda in the Islamic Maghreb, AQMI, Boko Haram) (IMAF,⁶ LAM⁷). The state is back, in two specific perspectives: the first is an ethnography of public services, of its materiality, for example, the administrative documents, and formal papers (CERI,⁸ IMAF). The second perspective is sectorial

⁶ IMAF – *Institut des mondes africains* (CNRS, IRD, EPHE, EHESS, Marseille and Paris 1 Universities). For more information, see Institut des mondes africains (2019).

⁷ LAM – *Les Afriques dans le monde* (CNRS and Sciences Po Bordeaux). For more information, see LAM 2019.

⁸ CERI – *Centre d'études et de recherches internationales* (CNRS and Sciences po Paris). For more information, see SciencesPo Centre de Recherche Internationales 2019.

public policy analysis, intending to demonstrate that ‘making public policies in the south’ is possible and to teach a lot to public policies specialists (LAM). There is also a strong interest in patrimony and the arts and the past and present role of culture in politics and identities (IMAF, LLACAN,⁹ LAM). More and more important are the inequalities of gender or, larger, the entirety of social inequalities, as well as mobilizations analyses (IMAF, LAM). The environment and resources are still important topics and shared by more and more disciplines (CESSMA,¹⁰ IMAF, LAM, PALOC,¹¹ PRODIG¹²). For example, in archaeology the research dynamics are with palaeontology and paleo-environments. Migration has always been a central topic, but there are political incentives from the French government to investigate current migrations, and the prospects for settlement and incorporation into French society (MIGRINTER,¹³ IMAF, LAM, URMIS¹⁴). The urbanization process in Africa, concerning not only large metropolises, but also mid-sized cities, paves the way for urban studies and urban/rural relations (CESSMA, LAM, LAVUE¹⁵, PRODIG). Health issues are more present than ever, due to the incentives for wider interdisciplinarity (i.e., social and human sciences (SHS) with hard sciences) and of many calls for proposals.

⁹ LLACAN – *Langages, langues et cultures d’Afrique noire* (CNRS et INALCO). For more information, see LLACAN 2019.

¹⁰ CESSMA – *Centre d’études en sciences sociales sur les mondes africains, américains et asiatiques* (Université Paris Diderot, INALCO and IRD). For more information see CESSMA Centre d’études en sciences sociales sur les mondes africains, américains et asiatiques 2019.

¹¹ PALOC – *Patrimoines locaux et gouvernance* (IRD and Muséum national d’histoire naturelle). For more information, see PALOC 2019.

¹² PRODIG – *Pôle de recherche pour l’organisation et la diffusion de l’information géographique* (CNRS, Paris 1, Paris IV and Paris 7 Universities). For more information, see PRODIG 2019.

¹³ MIGRINTER – *Migrations internationales* (CNRS and Poitiers University). For more information, see MIGRINTER – CNRS 2019.

¹⁴ URMIS – *Unité de recherches migrations et sociétés*. For more information, see URMIS 2019.

¹⁵ LAVUE – *Laboratoire architecture, ville, urbanisme, environnement* (CNRS, Paris Ouest Nanterre and Paris 8 Universities, Ministry of culture). For more information, see LAVUE 2019.

Country Distribution according to Published Articles

The colonial legacy has, for a long time, oriented researchers towards North African countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) and the so-called *pré carré* in Sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal, Ivory Coast, Niger, Gabon, Cameroon, Congo, Chad). But in the 1970s and the 1980s, a new generation of French researchers, often trained in the USA and Canada, investigated English-speaking Africa (Botswana, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe ...) and Portuguese-speaking countries (Angola, Mozambique ...). Later still, from the 1990s onwards, French researchers have been working on Africa and its connecting spaces (through the Indian Ocean, or transatlantic connections with slave-made societies). This evolution is partially visible in the country distribution (as shown in the published articles) in Figure 6.

Variation 1 ^{re} /3 ^e période : pays en régression		Variation 1 ^{re} /3 ^e période : pays en progression	
Pays			
Côte d'Ivoire	-8,87 %	Tanzanie	1,18 %
Cameroun	-4,46 %	Mozambique	1,23 %
Tchad	-3,98 %	Burkina Faso	1,36 %
Rwanda	-3,20 %	Ouganda	1,50 %
République du Congo	-3,16 %	République démocra- tique du Congo	2,34 %
Niger	-3,01 %	Kenya	2,47 %
Madagascar	-2,22 %	Égypte	3,53 %
Bénin	-1,93 %	Mauritanie	3,57 %
Mali	-1,53 %	Libye	4,06 %
République centrafricaine	-1,05 %	Afrique du Sud	4,14 %
Gabon	-0,79 %	Maroc	6,41 %
Comores	-0,77 %	Tunisie	6,88 %
Burundi	-0,64 %	Algérie	6,95 %
Sénégal	-0,42 %		

Figure 6: Country distribution. 1st period: 1960-1979; 3rd period: 2000-2013, (*Livre Blanc*: 101).

The distribution of the articles published on certain countries in the two periods under consideration shows some significant patterns. The top five countries were and still are Ivory Coast, Senegal, Mali, and Cameroon, representing one out of four articles on both periods. But some countries are more studied in the more recent period, like Mauritania, South Africa, Kenya, and less but increasing, Uganda, Tanzania, and Mozambique. Those figures may have a bias concerning the ranking of North African countries. Their progression here is mainly due to the integration in the corpus of the Maghreb-Machrek Review in 2003, whereas this was not the case in the first period. Moreover, those figures maybe hide the vacuum left. There are few, if any studies, on Namibia, Zambia, and Malawi. However, more surprisingly, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, or the Central African Republic seem to be the ‘forgotten countries’ of the current period.

The change from ‘Africanism’ to ‘African Studies’ and recent research trends in the topics and countries studied is a reality. Some wellknown researchers in Africanist studies strongly regret this, and in particular the weakening of the humanities (Ricard 2004). Yet, to understand these compelling changes, one requires an understanding of the institutions and rules of the French academic system.

Institutional and Financial Constraints and Resources

African Studies are trendy, in demand, in today’s France. This trend started at the end of the 2000s. The CNRS implemented a new policy toward Area studies in general and Middle East and African Studies in particular (Alliance ATHENA 2016). It proceeded to the recruitment of new scholars and supported the restructuring of the research centres. Meanwhile, financing research in the humanities and social sciences in general, and in African fields in particular, has never been so difficult. *Les Afriques dans le Monde* (LAM, Africas in the World) is a good example of those trends.

The Restructuring of French African Studies

The joint policies of universities and the CNRS, in some cases with IRD, together with the HCRES evaluations, led to an institutional restructuring of the humanities and social sciences in France. Several small groups

disappeared or joined to meet the new criteria (minimum size, financial capacity, scientific acknowledgement). As far as African Studies are concerned, several teams merged to build two main research centres: *Les Afriques dans le monde* (LAM) in Bordeaux and Pau, in 2011 and *l'Institut des Mondes Africains* (IMAF) in Paris and Marseille, in 2014.¹⁶

Both centres are living testimony to the way African Studies in France have changed. They are multidisciplinary, bringing together the humanities and the social sciences. LAM is more identified with contemporary political and social issues, whereas IMAF is more identified with issues of long history and anthropology. They are fully dedicated to the African continent. The plural, an anomaly in the French language (and each time corrected by the automatic correction!) is important there. The 54 countries on the continent are as diverse as European or American countries are, and this diversity must be accounted for. Moreover, the scientific program of those research centres provides an open conception of Africa, considered larger than just the continent. The aim is to document African connections and African presence in the world: crossing the Atlantic with societies that emerged from the slave trade; traversing the Sahara to North Africa and Middle East countries, crossing the Indian Ocean, or links to the North.

The reconfiguration of French African Studies was the result of long reflection.¹⁷ The CNRS strongly supported this new institutional and scientific restructuring by creating the French network in African Studies: *GIS études africaines en France*. This network brings together some researchers belonging to 23 research centres, with only the two mentioned above being fully dedicated to Africa. Moreover, the recruitment policy of the CNRS privileges new researchers with interdisciplinary profiles in non-western fields that would not have suited university structures before. During the last ten years, 20 Africanist scholars have been hired. It is a huge effort considering the level of appointments.

¹⁶ IMAF is the result of the merging of three laboratories: CEMAF (*Centre d'études des mondes africains*, since 2006), CEAF (*Centre d'études africaines*, since 1957) and CHSIM (*Centre d'histoire sociale de l'islam méditerranéen* since 1994).

¹⁷ For more information on these reflections, see Darbon 2003; Chrétien 2004; Sabouret 2010.

Funding Matters

In France, as everywhere, research is strongly dependent on financial opportunities for funding. French research changed at the end of the 20th century, and the funding logic moved from a model based on a regular basic dotation from the state to the laboratory, to a model based on the funding of individual projects. Consequently, basic state dotation decreased, replaced by calls for project proposals. In a research centre like LAM, 80 percent of the operating budget (besides salaries) comes from research programs. The annual basic budget allowance from our mother institutions (CNRS and Sciences Po Bordeaux) is around 20 percent.

Laboratories had to find money together with other partners. Policy-driven programs now have a very important place in a laboratory's budget, with a strong impact on how research is shaped and oriented. In Bordeaux, the Aquitaine region had a determinant influence. To be able to get their funding, research projects have to include partners from the private sector (companies, NGOs, associations) and to prove a social utility for the region.

Different institutions provide funding for research. Primarily, the European Research Council (ERC) and the *Agence Nationale pour la Recherche* (ANR), whose call for proposal are free of direction, like 'white ANR' or 'junior researchers ANR'. But the success rate is very low. ANR was created in 2005 by Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin's government. It was supposed to be the principal way of allocating resources to research. But those resources keep getting reduced since 2005, drastically so since 2017.¹⁸ The total budget of the ANR was initially around €600m, but since 2010, it has been around €400m. The success rate was initially around 25 percent, but is now around 12 percent. In ten years, the numbers of projects submitted increased from roughly 5500 to roughly 7500 (+ 33 percent), but the number of projects accepted decreased from roughly 1500 to roughly 1000 (- 33 percent). The ANR claims 15,000 funded projects since 2005, 221 of which include the keyword '*Afrique*'.¹⁹ African fields are clearly marginalized, as shown in Figure 7.

The situation is clearly not brilliant, especially when the general evolution of the ANR, and of the SHS particularly, are taken into consid-

¹⁸ See the assessment of the period from 2006-2016, Miquelard 2016.

¹⁹ The research for this part of the article and the accompanying figures was done on the website of the ANR, using the key word 'afrique.'

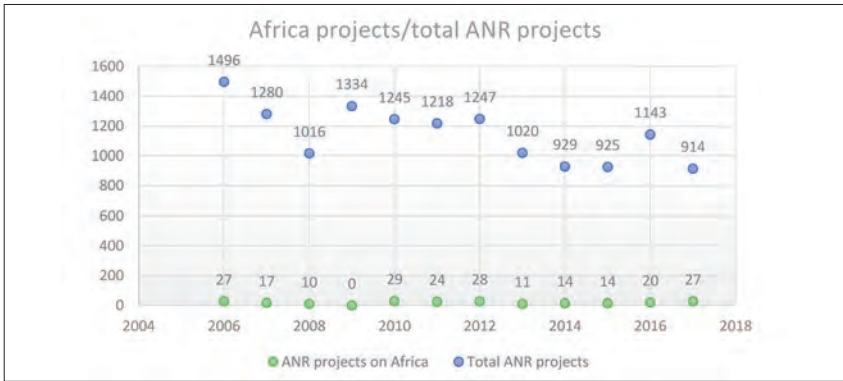


Figure 7: Africa-related research projects within the total of ANR projects funded

eration. In 2016, the ANR gave financial support to 1143 projects, but only 20 had Africa as field, subject, or keyword; five only were for a SHS project on Africa. In 2017, ANR gave financial support to 914 projects, 27 on Africa, with five SHS projects.

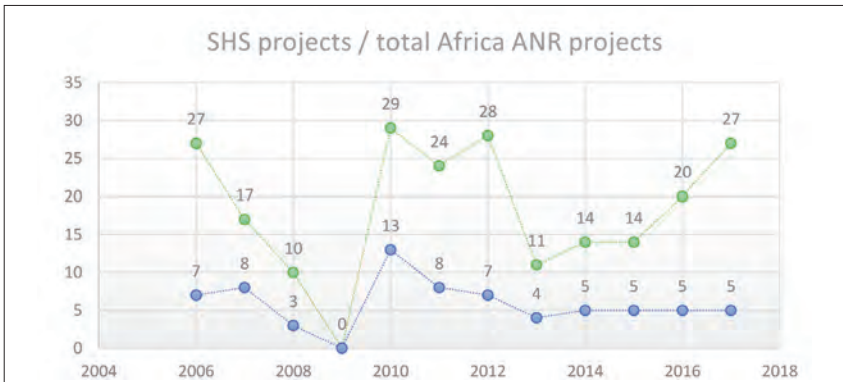


Figure 8: Rate of social and human sciences (SHS) projects within Africa-related projects funded by ANR

The situation with the ERC is no better. France won ten ERC projects on Africa in SHS (2007-2017), but only two on Sub-Saharan Africa, both in 2017.²⁰

²⁰ Tatiana Nikitina (LLACAN): Discourse reporting in African storytelling; Camille Lefebvre (IMAF): Hausa and Kanuri languages as archive for the history of Sahara and Sahel in 18th and 19th century.

LAM as an Illustration

Bordeaux is the oldest spot for African Studies in France, after Paris. The old CEAN²¹ was created in 1958 (compared with CEAF, founded by Balandier in 1957). In 2011, the CEAN merged with the CREPAO²² (a small team on East Africa at Pau University), and several colleagues from Bordeaux universities (anthropologists from the University of Bordeaux II; geographers from the University of Bordeaux III; economists and lawyers from the University of Bordeaux IV) joined to build LAM. LAM now consists of 40 permanent researchers, ten administration staff members, and around 90 doctoral students. They represent seven disciplines, all converging towards the same project (see Figure 9).

LAM's project was built on several strong ideas. The first idea was to build interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding of African political dynamics. Whatever their initial discipline might be, all the researchers converge towards African politics under all aspects (politics, policy, polity). The second idea is to consider AfricaS as a plural, in the globalization dynamics: analyzing connected AfricaS (AfricaS in the world, Di-

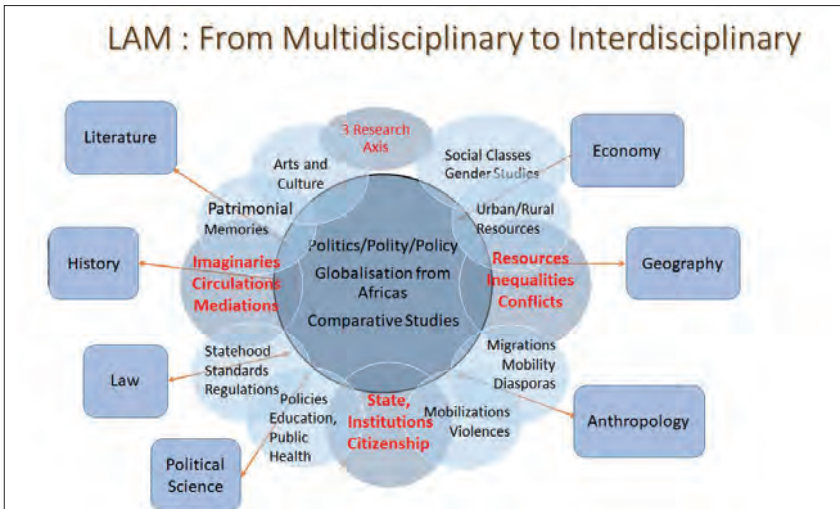


Figure 9: The scientific axes of LAM

²¹ CEAN – Centre d'étude d'Afrique noire (CNRS and Sciences Po Bordeaux).

²² CREPAO – Centre de recherche et d'études sur les pays d'Afrique Orientale (université of Pau et des pays de l'Adour).

asporas, shared problematics in post-colonial societies, in post-slavery societies). The third strong line is not to consider study fields focusing on Africa as special or different, but to build a comparative perspective, to show how these fields can contribute to the general academic debates. As Coulon put it: “African societies are fully normal and common societies” (Coulon 1996: 2).

This initial perspective gave birth to a scientific project made out of three research axes, each axis not exclusive from the others. LAM can rely on a strong network of academics and research centres in Africa. Some French ones, the UMIFRE (French mixed research units in Africa, of the Foreign Affairs ministry and CNRS) and IRD centres. But some gaps remain, as the map shows (Figure 10).

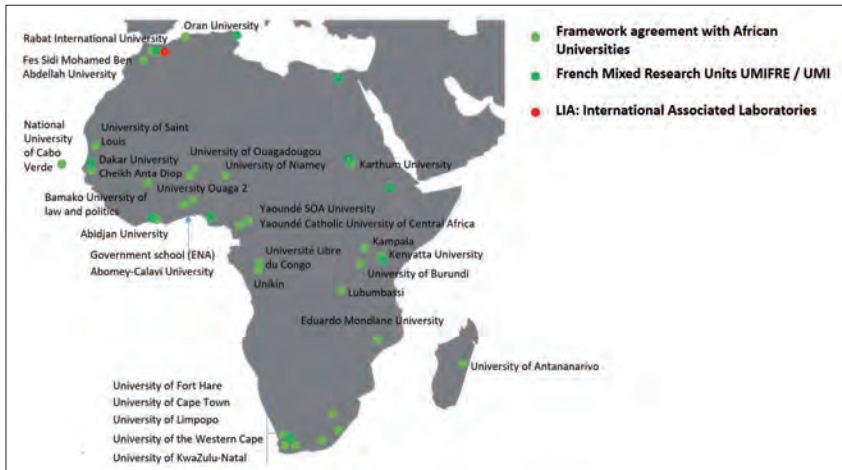


Figure 10: LAM's academic partners in Africa

Joint-research programs have been implemented with partners out of Africa too, in Europe, the United States, and the Caribbean, and more recently with Japan. Not to speak of the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (AEGIS) network, of which LAM is a founding member.

As a good illustration of the financial trends mentioned above, LAM is now conducting projects with a wide range of non-academic partners. We are privileged in Bordeaux to have the strong commitment of the local public authorities (Aquitaine region, Bordeaux metropolis), and a very rich fabric of cultural associations and NGOs. The Aquitaine re-

gion's model has been the Institute of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth.²³ For instance, LAM is a founding member of two regional networks, IDAF (Institute of Directors of Associations and Foundations) and SO COOP, with a strong commitment to research in terms of social utility. Together with those non-academic partners, LAM's researchers have implemented several action-research programs in development studies (Morocco, Madagascar) and administration capacity building (Guinea, Mali).

The training programs testify to the same evolution. For a long time, LAM's ancestor (the CEAN) has been managing a single research track (DEA, Diploma of advanced studies, equivalent to a master program) leading to PhDs in African Studies. In 2002 and 2005, new master programs have been implemented in Sciences Po Bordeaux, with a professional focus which goes beyond mere academic research. LAM's members are teaching in four master's degree programs, two of them leading to PhDs in four doctoral schools.

As a Conclusion?

African Studies have been, and still are, debated and disputed. There is not one paradigm, but a perpetual debate on competing paradigms: universalism vs. culturalism; economic vs. political determination; disorder paradigm vs. the entire world, etc.

French African Studies are nowadays strongly supported. This, however, might not last for long. Like the long history of African Studies in France show, it is a cycle of trends. The most recent orientations of French academics in African Studies, even though not named as such, are similar to what Eva Spies and Rüdiger Seeseman depict in German and more widely in European African Studies, as "pluralicity and relationality" (Spies and Seesemann 2016).

There are numerous challenges still to address for French academics working on and with Africa. The first one is to normalize the African fields of study in our academic arenas. The situation is very different from geography or anthropology, where Africa is at the heart of the discipline; in political science or law, Africa is still 'exotic' and therefore not

²³ After a visit to Iwalewaha by Alain Rousset (president of the Aquitaine region), he strongly supported academic civil society projects focused towards Africa in the Aquitaine region.

seriously assessed. The second one is to keep access to the field open. The map of the French Foreign Ministry colors most of the continent in red and orange, meaning that it is too dangerous for researchers, and access is forbidden, which is a strong limitation to research. The third one is the question of how to raise funding to work with African universities and scholars. European programs (ERC) do have a few African countries on the map. On the Francophone side, the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* (AUF) is powerless. Euro-African funding opportunities still have to be invented and designed. It is both insane and a non-sense to study AfricaS without Africans.

Acknowledgements

Figures 1 to 6 come from the *Livre Blanc sur les Etudes Africaines en France*. The data and quantitative analysis on theses and published articles presented here have been produced by Jocelyne Streiff-Fénart and URMIS Nice, under the supervision of Pierre Boilley, the director of the network at that time.

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