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**Gathering Voices. Perspectives on the
Social Sciences in Southern Africa**

*Editors: Teresa Cruz María e Silva
Ari Sitas*

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PREFACE

The voices gathered here participated in three encounters. Firstly, in 1996, the International Sociological Association (ISA) in conjunction with the South African Sociological Association (SASA) organised a regional workshop in Durban to define our regional sociological heritage and its prospects. Secondly, the South African Sociological Association, as part of its Umtata Congress in 1997 attempted to continue some of the themes that were placed on its agenda by the 1996 workshop. Finally, an encounter in Mozambique in August 1997 deepened the discussions and possibilities of speaking about Southern African traditions.

So the contributions assembled in this volume are a mere start in the process of developing genuine, regional scholarly communication. We understand the "region" as the SADC twelve states represented in the Southern African Development Community - SADC: Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Although politically and economically the community has made great strides in cooperation and development programmes, intellectually we are still caught by our particular trajectories and differences, by our scant resources and by South Africa's role as a pariah state until its democracy was inaugurated in 1994.

It is no place here to rehearse the colonial histories that bound the region together and how colonial authorities defined common experiences, histories, socio-economic, political and cultural linkages and animosities. Nor is it the space to discuss the boundaries, borders and administrative units that were designed to serve the political and economic interests of the great colonial empires. It would also be a major task to discuss how boundaries and cultures, experience and history remain fluid.

Defining a "southern region" of Africa must be sensitive to past nuances. In the past Angola's history was intertwined closely with the central Africa region; Tanzania was in turn, part and parcel of an Eastern African region, facing the influences of the Indian Ocean alongside Mozambique and what was to become the Zulu Kingdom. Mauritius was only very recently considered to be part of the Southern African region. Finally, the most recent events in 'Zaire' showed how much part of that put pressure on the borders of the region and how migrations from there end up in Johannesburg.

The intention was to be as flexible and wide-ranging as possible; yet, intentions in academic contexts are not easily realised: many colleagues who promised to participate and write have been swamped by teaching and policy commitments; many too promised to participate but placed their efforts on more burning political issues. So this volume is a first and humble attempt to

speak in a cooperative way and the editors are aware how many important voices and traditions have been left out.

The first section involves country reports from Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa. Attempts to commission overviews from the rest of the SADC countries proved difficult for the reasons outlined above. The second section deals with the eradication of Apartheid in South Africa, the fortress that destabilised in the Apartheid period all the subcontinent. The third, focuses on the emerging voices of women's demands and the need for gender-sensitive scientific work. The fourth looks at the perennial problem of land relations in agrarian Africa. The fifth looks at the identitarian issues of Afrocentrism, its pitfalls and the alternatives available to us. The final and sixth looks at the "democratisation" processes in our continent and region.

The editors would like to record their thanks to Prof Johann Maree who initiated the process alongside Prof Immanuel Wallerstein; to Prof Charles Crothers and the Department of Sociology of the University of Natal and Ms Marlene Naidoo who organised the first regional workshop in 1996. Prof Nsolo Mijere and the Department of Sociology at the University of the Transkei for the second encounter; finally, Halima Khunoethe and Mpho Motlhabani for their support.

Teresa Cruz Maria e Silva and Ari Sitas

INTRODUCTION SOUTHERN AFRICAN SOCIAL SCIENCE IN THE LATE 20th CENTURY

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Sociology in the West has been, according to Raymond Aron (1973), a constant struggle against the ghost of Karl Marx. To this could be added the latest texts of Jacques Derrida (1994) on the "spectral" and "ghostly" legacy of Marxism. From a southern perspective, sociology has been the constant engagement with the consequences and tactile reality of also Weber's applications.

It has been stated that the continent did not only lack the makings of the modern psyche, of the cultural formations of the Protestant Ethic, indeed of modernity but it also lacked the calculating, legal-rational forms of authority that *facilitated* modernism. Whereas the former, in conjunction with theories of racial stratification constructed the African "other," the *native*, the latter became the *sine qua non* of native administration and indirect rule. Between the native, the tribal and the civil, between the "jungle" and the garden, between the ascribed and the rational, there was the *enculturating* regime of education and schooling.

Therefore, on the one side of the spectrum the complex historical traditions that defined Africa's past were stirred into the non-modern or the "*traditional*" as one undifferentiated soup; on the other side stood, modernisation with its distinctive institutions which African societies did not possess. It was seen to be the duty of those who were "educated" into modernism to lead, after decolonisation and the national independence struggles into modernity, into development as opposed to underdevelopment, into a camera obscura of the western, advanced, usually capitalist societies.

One of colonialism's tragedies was the stirring of all complexity into an undifferentiated soup: much of what Xaba describes below as African cosmologies and cosmogonies, practical forms of knowledge and moral disputations; many of the forms of differentiation and individuation- all aspects of vibrant oralities and networks of communication and performance, were marginalised, trivialised, flattened and institutionalised. Their knowledge-effects were described as an *absence*, as a *lack* of substance. The carriers of