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L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI
إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

**Objects of Salvation, Subjects of Law:
The Native Subject and the Refugee Camp**

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The modern university in Africa is a postcolonial phenomena that has, in its institutional and disciplinary forms, replicated the European organization of knowledge. Early attempts to articulate a role for higher education in Africa took divergent views. Some argued the need to formulate a role for the university that emphasized nationalist visions of Africanizing the social composition of the university.

Others argued that the university should be structured to provide the human resources through which developmental needs were to be met.

Structural adjustment programmes in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s decimated the resource allocation to African higher education institutions and led to large scale migrations of critical scholars to the European and North American metropoles. University research became dependent on external funding, which shifted the priorities of research, driven by the interests and priorities determined by donor agencies of the North. This has given rise, argues Mahmood Mamdani, to the dominance of a market-led rationale in university research of which a 'consultancy culture' is symptomatic. Mamdani has argued that there is currently no existing alternative model to the consultancy culture: 'it will have to be created'. An initiative is underway under his direction at the Makerere Institute for Social Research to create an example of a possible model. The Center for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa has joined these discussions as a partner institution to the MISR initiative, and we have held a series of workshops to establish the intellectual vision which would frame a rethinking of what it means to do humanities and social science research in a postcolonial university in Africa today. This paper is an individual reflection on one aspect of this project premised on the following questions: if we are to undo the colonial legacy of knowledge production in Africa, and think Africa as a place from which to think the world, what would be the intellectual challenges that lie ahead? Drawing on Latin American , Asian experiences, and other African experiences, this paper explores the question of the epistemological and conceptual foundations through which we might think about the renewal of the humanities and social sciences by tracking the intellectual career of a concept: 'democracy' and 'democratization' in African studies. It takes stock of the ways in which colonialism, nationalism, modernization theory and Marxism have shaped the conceptual categories through which we make sense of democracy and argues for a critical reworking of these pasts in order to develop a conceptual

grammar which illuminates the predicaments of Africa, not as a failure, but as an assessment of its concrete forms. This involves translating African political practices into theoretical insights. The paper interrogates the ways in which 'democracy' and 'democratization is thought in historicist, quantitative, indexical and modular forms that undergird the externally imposed assumptions about democracy in the discipline of Political Science as it exists on the continent.