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# AFRICAN SOCIALISMS AND POSTSOCIALISMS

*M. Anne Pitcher and*
*Kelly M. Askew*

In the 1980s, historic political and economic shifts dealt a fatal blow to the foundational pillars of socialist systems worldwide. Unable to respond to the challenges from within and without to their attempted monopolization of economic and political power, socialist regimes succumbed to processes of structural adjustment, economic liberalization and political pluralism. Although scholars have focused in depth on the downfall of socialist and communist regimes in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern and Central Europe, the impact of these changes on socialist states in Africa was no less monumental. The 1989 collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 contributed to the demise of several avowedly Marxist-Leninist African states such as Ethiopia and Congo-PR. Having lost key strategic allies and the primary referents of socialist success, they consequently underwent regime change. In addition, ruling parties in several countries such as Benin, Mozambique and Zambia jettisoned most of the rhetoric of socialism that had been employed in the 1970s and 1980s and began to speak instead of 'emerging markets', 'efficiency' and 'democratic participation'. On the ground, the impact of the changes was much more variegated. In some places, even as companies changed from state to private hands, socialist ideology endured, persisting, for example, in Tanzania, whose populist version of socialism (termed *Ujamaa*, literally 'familyhood') defied easy classification by capitalists and communists alike.

Just as 'democracy' today has become a common idiom of political parlance, so too might 'socialism' be considered for Africa an idiom of the 1950s to the 1980s. During that time, no fewer than thirty-five countries out of fifty-three proclaimed themselves 'socialist' at one or other point in their history. So widespread was the commitment to

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ANNE PITCHER is Professor of Political Science at Colgate University, Hamilton, NY, USA. In 2003–4, she was a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC, where she conducted research on political and economic reform in Sub-Saharan Africa. She is the author of *Transforming Mozambique: The Politics of Privatization, 1975–2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) and *Politics in the Portuguese Empire: The State, Industry and Cotton, 1926–1974* (Oxford University Press, 1993). Her articles have appeared in *Comparative Politics, Third World Quarterly, Journal of Southern African Studies, Análise Social* and several edited collections.

KELLY M. ASKEW is an Associate Professor at the University of Michigan in the Department of Anthropology and the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies (CAAS). Her publications include articles on nationalism, Swahili gender relations and Hollywood film production, and a co-edited volume with Richard R. Wilk entitled *The Anthropology of Media: A Reader* (Blackwell, 2002). Her monograph *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Production in Tanzania* (University of Chicago Press, 2002) was named a finalist for the 2003 Herskovits Award by the African Studies Association.

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socialism that Fenner Brockway, a British Labour Party intellectual, once asserted: 'Nearly every politically alert African nationalist regards himself as a socialist ... Indeed, it is not too much to say that the most dynamic socialist movement in the world to-day is in Africa. It is the most comprehensively revolutionary continent' (cited in Muravchik 2002: 199). Interpretations of and adherence to socialism(s) in Africa varied from case to case. While some countries aligned themselves with the Soviet Union and/or China, other nations attempted to chart non-aligned paths between the capitalist West and communist East, searching for 'a ''third'' way in a ''third world'' ' (Cohen 1991: 3). Yet, whatever the differences among socialist formations in Africa and in other parts of the world, the impact of socialism on the lives of ordinary Africans was significant. Whether we highlight the suffering that took place in communal villages in Ethiopia or Tanzania, or emphasize the hope that socialist values brought to women, workers or youth, the effect was tangible.

While the fall of socialism provoked scholars of Eastern Europe to investigate its consequences for people and governments in the former Soviet sphere and also prompted enquiries into the future of socialism in states such as China and Vietnam (Walder 1995; Grabher and Stark 1997; Szelényi 1998; Stark and Bruszt 1998; Berdahl et al. 2000; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Cohen 1999; De Soto and Dudwick 2000; Hann 2002; Mandel and Humphrey 2002; Verdery 1996, 2002; Hibou 2004), the fate of postsocialist states in Africa has received less attention from both the media and the academy (but see Hughes 1992; Barkan 1994; Kaure 1999; Saul 2001; James et al. 2002; Pitcher 2002; Chabal 2002). In the popular and the scholarly imaginations, 'postsocialism' is a culturally and geographically bounded experience confined primarily to the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and China, and conditionally to Cuba and Vietnam. Just as during the Cold War when students of socialism either doubted or ignored the commitment to socialism by African countries, similarly, most theorists of postsocialism overlook the persistence of historical memories, the symbolic and discursive continuities, and the institutional ruptures and restorations in those African countries that once embraced socialism and have now relinquished it in favour of neo-liberal reforms.

Yet, for inhabitants and analysts of formerly socialist countries in Africa, the postsocialist moment is real enough. Across the continent, one finds processes of governmental decentralization well under way along with the privatization of state-operated enterprises and the abandonment of one-party systems in favour of political pluralism. Multinational chains and brand names are supplanting local products and embedding themselves in urban landscapes, on radio and television ads and in popular culture. And as states divest themselves of the responsibility for providing basic social services in the name of structural adjustment, people are devising ways (not always successfully) to obtain their own employment and housing, provide for their own health and educational needs, fetch or purchase their own water and dispose of their own garbage. Reactions to these changes span a wide spectrum.

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Some commentators have issued trenchant critiques of the ravages of neo-liberalism, drawing attention in particular to the superficiality of democracy, the lack of accountability of international financial institutions, and the reconfiguration of social networks following the rise of the 'Washington consensus' (Ferguson 1993; Bayart et al. 1999; Hibou 2000). Others see new opportunities in the growth of women's groups and other associations representing 'civil society', the expansion of the print and broadcast media, the respect for rights such as the right to free speech or the right to private property, and the holding of regular elections in some countries (Tripp 2000; Bratton et al. 2005). Few observers, however, have framed these transformations with reference to a previous socialist moment, or interrogated whether, or how, a socialist past might shape a postsocialist present.

Instead of 'postsocialism', the language of 'neo-liberalism', 'democratic transition' and 'civil society' dominates discussions of Africa's recent transformations. It looks forward to a presumed rosy and successful future, rather than looking backwards to a failed socialist past. And it prevails because its many advocates – development experts, multinational representatives, foreign consultants, NGOs and the current African elite – dictate its key terms. They assume and assert that the collapse of socialism has left a 'blank slate' on which the story of 'free market democracy' can be written. In so doing, they devalue and ignore the interpenetration and interweaving of the old with the new order in the formulation of national policies as well as in local responses to the enormous changes that have taken place.

## CHARTING 'AFRICAN POSTSOCIALISMS'

This special issue on 'African Postsocialisms' seeks to address theoretically and empirically the current state of formerly socialist African countries by privileging postsocialism as its frame. It asks: now that most countries in Africa have officially abandoned socialism, what institutional and discursive legacies has socialism left behind, and how might they inform current processes? Secondly, what idioms and symbolic frameworks, collective strategies and individual practices have state elites, urban workers or village traders employed to interpret, reject or respond to the momentous political and economic changes that have occurred in formerly socialist systems over the past decade? Lastly, what has been gained and what has been lost with the passing of socialism in Africa?

The issue relies on ethnographically informed case studies from a diverse range of formerly socialist countries including Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania and the Republic of Congo to address these questions. In it, established Africanists representing multiple disciplines (anthropology, geography, history and political science) explore the reconfiguration, transformation and erasure of socialism in states that have undergone transition and now claim to be 'market democracies', or 'liberal democracies', or 'emerging markets', or one of the other

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buzzwords associated with neo-liberalism. Thematically, they trace the complex, non-linear, lived experiences of those individuals and communities that have negotiated the shift from socialism(s) to postsocialism(s). In rural villages and in sectors such as transport and manufacturing, the articles document the socio-economic difficulties and conflicts produced by the recommodification of economic life and the innovative as well as destructive responses adopted by farmers, traders and workers to privatization and marketization. Secondly, they look at the ways in which government officials and local villagers have reconstituted, restored or rejected socialist values and discourse (of solidarity, modernity, the end of exploitation) to mitigate the demise of the one-party state and the uncertainty of democracy and structural adjustment. Lastly, they trace the emergence or re-emergence of local ethnic and religious differences, material and symbolic opportunities, and contests over memory, meaning and identity that the period of 'socialist unity' either stifled or camouflaged, and that the adoption of neo-liberal institutions has now exacerbated or effaced.

In the opening article on Tanzania, Kelly Askew reveals the inconsistencies and vulnerabilities of the previous socialist period, both on the mainland and in Zanzibar, by tracing the ambiguities that surface in songs and recollections of Nyerere on the occasion of his death. Through analysis of over 100 lamentation songs, she explores how Tanzanian musicians assess his legacy and how they continue to express many of the values he promoted even while studiously avoiding direct references to socialism. Likewise, David Eaton documents the 'chaotic', postcolonial plurality (Mbembe 2000: 148) that abounds in the metaphors, symbols and stories of the Republic of Congo with the end of a single-party Marxist government and the stormy passage to democracy. He exposes the complex political imaginations through which Congolese seek to 'diagnose' reconfigurations of national institutional power and also their local social reality.

Focusing on the village of Gamole in Konso, south-west Ethiopia, Elizabeth Watson traces the religious and socio-economic cleavages over land and status that have arisen there since the Ethiopian government officially ended socialism in 1991. She seeks to underscore the persistence of institutions and identities from the pre- to the post-socialist periods and the reappearance of practices that the socialist regime frowned upon. At the same time, she delineates the enormity of the changes and their impact on Konso villages in the last decade: the resurgence of trading networks, the decline of agriculture, the consolidation of economic and religious identities, and an active market in the buying and selling of land. These factors have fuelled a simmering conflict grounded in religious and economic grievances.

Turning to particular economic sectors in Mozambique and Tanzania respectively, Anne Pitcher and Jamie Monson study contemporary struggles by workers and peasants over liberalization and privatization. Documenting the material and structural changes that Mozambique has undergone since it dropped references to socialism in the 1990 Constitution, Pitcher examines the use of contrasting rhetorics by

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state elites versus skilled, urban workers as they seek to legitimate or challenge the transformation. She questions whether the new plurality of discourses in Mozambique has not come at the cost of job security and a sense of social solidarity for urban workers. Similarly, through an in-depth study of the history of the TAZARA railway, Monson explores the contested meanings surrounding its socialist construction and its postsocialist attempted privatization. She illustrates the extent to which local villages 'used the language of socialism to campaign successfully for the retention of socialist principles that they defined as important to them'.

We, as contributors to this issue, confronted a number of methodological and analytical challenges that merit attention here in order to provide a framework for the articles that follow. These included how to define socialism, what role memory and forgetting played in the postsocialist period, and what sources to rely on when attempting to capture the variety of postsocialisms. Rather than treating socialism as a 'black box' consisting of a finite number of elements existing in a clearly delineated geographical space, our approach recognizes the diverse environments in which the rhetoric and principles that African leaders labelled 'socialist' were applied and the reactions of those who were affected by them. We seek to appreciate the creative as well as coercive tension among the ideas embodied in the iconography and texts of governments that called themselves socialist, the actual practice of these regimes, and the experiences of communities and individuals who were the participants and recipients in the process. In doing so, we acknowledge the fluidity and elasticity of concepts that were broadly regarded as 'socialist' such as democratic centralism, state ownership, communal villages, notions of egalitarianism and social justice, and the worker–peasant alliance. Moreover, we recognize their social histories, their enduring legacies and their novel recombinations in contemporary discourse and practice. In this way, the articles seek theoretically to break the mould of Soviet-centrism that characterizes much of the literature on postsocialism and to invite other scholars to include African countries in comparative analysis.

In reflecting on the plurality of postsocialisms that have arisen from the plurality of socialisms (see Hann 1993), we also confronted the issues of forgetting and memory. In the political and economic configurations existing in Africa today, are there memories of socialism? Do these memories coexist with the neo-liberal principles that many governments espouse, or are they in contradistinction to them? Are memories collective or individual? Many scholars have problematized memory in other contexts and historical time periods, and their work has guided us in our own study. In this special issue, we seek to know, as Douglass has said of English miners, whether peoples in the formerly socialist states in Africa 'carry history', that is, whether they internalized and now remember principles and practices from the socialist period (Douglass 1981: 61).

Yet we recognize that collective memories of socialism and lived experiences interpenetrate and commingle such that memories become

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multi-faceted, layered and fragmented. They have class, ethnic, racial and gendered dimensions; they shape and can be shaped by new experiences and ideas (Debouzy 1990; Crane 1997; Confino 1997). They can idealize and romanticize the past, burdening their carriers with a nostalgia that potentially immobilizes them in the face of new challenges (see Brown 2003). Or, alternatively, they can join the rich repertoire of African moral discourse and can be used as 'intellectual and political resources for the future' (Ferguson 1993: 89). This multi-dimensionality complicates the scholarly task of interpretation but can also enrich analyses that rely on memories to understand the present. On the other hand, individuals and communities can forget consciously or unconsciously what went before as political, ideological and economic configurations change. Our articles try to be aware of the complexities and contortions of memory and forgetting.

Connected to the study of socialisms and postsocialisms is the use of sources. Reflecting on the 'past in the present' and trying to come to terms with memories and lived experiences required accessing the widest possible variety of sources. In these articles, scholars do not privilege exclusively one type of source over another. Instead, they creatively combine an extensive panoply of data including ethnographic research, fieldwork, archival work and primary sources such as newspaper accounts. They have turned to *radio trottoir*, popular songs, national anthems, oral interviews, novels and letters to newspapers. Using these sources, we were mindful of Stephen Ellis's concerns about their pitfalls and limitations; but, like Ellis, we also viewed them as rich repositories conveying manifold images and expressions from a multiplicity of voices (Ellis 2002).

## CONFRONTING AND CONCEPTUALIZING AFRICAN POSTSOCIALISMS

These case studies, together with evidence from other postsocialist countries in Africa, allow us to draw a number of preliminary conclusions regarding the nature of postsocialisms across Africa. As with the adoption of socialism, the processes of retreat from socialist ideology and policy have varied widely. Whereas students and workers in Benin joined forces in a mass mobilization campaign for reform called *renouveau démocratique* that began in January 1989, predating the fall of the Berlin Wall by nine months (Allen et al. 1989; Allen 1992), the IMF and World Bank imposed reform on Tanzania and Mozambique in the mid-1980s by means of loan conditionalities. In contrast to what happened in most Eastern European countries, Tanzania's and Mozambique's ruling parties did not collapse under reform, but successfully negotiated the transition by transforming themselves from defenders of socialism to champions of neo-liberalism. Angola's ruling party, on the other hand, has neither collapsed nor reformed to any considerable degree (Messiant 1994; Hodges 2003). Moreover, the transition from socialism has involved varying degrees of violence and sometimes none at all. In Ethiopia, violent

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conflict enabled transition with the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)'s successful military offensive against the Mengistu government, whereas in Congo-PR a peaceful constitutional conference in 1991 unleashed a spiral of divisions that culminated in the devastating 1997 civil war (Clapham 1992; Menga 1993; Nsafou 1996; Clark 1998, 2002).

It could be argued that Ghana and Mali have experienced their second round of postsocialist transformation. Ghana pursued a socialist path under Kwame Nkrumah that was abruptly cut short by a military coup in 1966. The government of Jerry Rawlings briefly resurrected it in neo-Marxist form in 1982 before it again retreated in the face of structural adjustment programmes (Haynes 1992). Similarly, Mali underwent a postsocialist transition with the overthrow of Modibo Keita in 1968, but experienced a resurgence in commitment to socialism in 1974 under Moussa Traoré before finally conceding to popular demands for reform in 1992.

Furthermore, as with initial motivations for the pursuit of socialism, so too have incentives for its abandonment in Africa involved national and international considerations. While many explanations exist for the popularity of socialism among African intellectuals and politicians in the decades following independence, we like the one offered by Seydou Badian Kouyate, former Minister of Planning and Rural Economy in Mali, who simply stated: 'You cannot be a capitalist when you have no capital' (quoted in Klinghoffer 1969: 20). Socialist ideology and policy offered several attractive elements to newly independent countries, and, while they spanned a wide spectrum from iterations of 'African socialism' to more orthodox Marxist 'scientific socialism', they nevertheless typically shared: (1) a language to promote the modernization and unification of emerging nation states, (2) centralized control of economic resources, (3) consolidation and expansion of the state, (4) emphasis on revolutionary change, and (5) international bonds to the wider community of socialist/communist states (promising economic, political and military assistance) (Friedland and Rosberg 1964; Zolberg 1966; Jowitt 1979; Young 1982; Ottaway and Ottaway 1986; Munslow 1986; Keller and Rothchild 1987; Donham 1999).

Postsocialist transformation offers no less in today's political and economic climate. With transition comes access to financial resources that would otherwise be denied, membership in a globalized community of democratic states (often positioned in opposition to the dreaded 'axis of evil'), acceptance as a 'modern' nation (newly defined) with respect for the rule of law and universal human rights, and the tantalizing but elusive potential of trade relations with powerful Western diplomatic partners. For many countries, the postsocialist moment has brought both relief and hardship. Projects of villagization, collectivization and industrialization that were so characteristic of high modernist, authoritarian socialist states have largely collapsed as postsocialist states pursue foreign investors and funds from the international financial institutions. Additionally, few Beninois will mourn the end of '*laxisme-béninisme*' – the phrase they used to describe the corruption and

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plundering that took place in the name of Marxism-Leninism under Kerekou (Allen 1992: 68). And few rural Mozambicans situated in the provinces of Zambezia and Nampula north of the capital will miss what they called the '*abaixo*' or 'down with' government because it used to condemn established customary practices alongside its critique of capitalism and colonialism after independence. In their places, democratic elections and greater freedom of expression have produced an explosion of political parties, associations, clubs, newspapers and journals, from business magazines such as *Profit* in Zambia or *Economia e Mercado* (Economy and Market) in Angola to satirical journals such as *Madukutsékélé* and *Le Choc* in Congo-PR. Some of these new groups and undertakings have been short-lived, but their appearance underscores Africa's new plurality.

On the other hand, the introduction of '*moins d'état, mieux d'état*' – to use the words of former President Abdou Diouf of Senegal – has resulted in the revival, continuation or escalation of conflicts over land and resources and the reordering of property relations. With the withdrawal of the state from the rural areas, there are growing clashes between the beneficiaries of the return of the market and those who have lost out under neo-liberal reforms, as the Ethiopian case illustrates. These are mirrored elsewhere in increasingly violent struggles that are racial, religious, gendered and class in nature. They are between former settlers reclaiming former companies and local villagers who either voluntarily moved or were forcibly removed to the spaces left vacant by departing settlers after independence. They are between foreign multinationals and smallholders, between Asians and Africans, between men and women. Where overt violence does not prevail, rural producers still confront hardships in adapting to oscillating world prices and intense competition over goods and land.

Finally, the sale of state-operated enterprises has undercut the social safety net provided, however poorly and incompletely, by the interventionist state in urban areas. For some, SOEs provided lifelong employment, free or subsidized housing, food allowances, a crèche for the children of employees, and even social clubs for workers during their leisure time. With liberalization and privatization, jobs are uncertain, wages are falling, and subsidies for healthcare, education or transportation have been eliminated. There is now a growing stratification between skilled and unskilled workers that the largely weakened unions can do little to ameliorate.

## POSTSOCIALIST ECONOMIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

Not only the reality of socialisms but also their promises have bequeathed to the postsocialist present a number of benefits and burdens. One reaction, contrary to the triumphalist predictions of neo-liberals, is the ambiguity and even overt hostility with which some have treated the demise of socialism. As one of the characters in Volker Braun's play, *Property*, laments, 'What I never had is being torn from

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me. What I did not live, I will miss forever' (quoted in Scribner 2003: 300). Reflecting on the nostalgic irony of these comments about the passing of the German Democratic Republic, Scribner notes: 'Whereas most Germans considered the communist project a failure, many others proceeded to mourn its passing, nonetheless. Paradoxically, what Braun's protagonist lost with the collapse of communism was the possible past he never really had' (Scribner 2003: 300).

This may be the case in Africa. Tripp's detailed study of the abandonment by workers of formal sector jobs as Tanzania's economic crisis worsened in the 1980s shatters illusions about the security offered by the socialist state (Tripp 1997). Similarly, Ihonvbere's account of the widespread protests against the Kaunda regime in Zambia, which eventually resulted in his defeat during the country's first democratic elections in 1991, leaves little doubt that the attraction of Zambia's 'African democratic socialism' had worn off (Ihonvbere 1996: 47–101). Nevertheless, images of utopia can remain in the imagination and can resurface in cafe conversation, on the radio and during demonstrations. This, too, has occurred in Africa. Like the characters in the film *Goodbye, Lenin*, who reinvent a better, improved version of socialism to hide its collapse from their mother, the masses in Tanzania, Congo-PR, Ethiopia and Mozambique may now be longing for a socialism that never existed, or its 'nonrealized potential' as Scribner puts it (2003: 311), to deal with a present that is characterized by pervasive unemployment, increasing poverty, brutal conflicts and the growth of HIV/AIDS.

Whether these imaginings will inspire overt resistance in the way that they have in Tanzania and Mozambique where strikes and protests have taken place, and whether such resistance will derail the processes of economic and political change that have engulfed the continent, is unclear. Yet, these discursive recollections and institutional remnants of socialism highlight the structural and rhetorical continuities that exist today. The continuity is manifest in the collective identities that some villagers have assumed to challenge the privatization of the TAZARA railway and in the expressions of worker solidarity during May Day demonstrations in Mozambique. It is evident in the persistence of social and economic hierarchies from the pre- to the postsocialist periods in Ethiopia. It is revealed in the intertwining of old and new idioms – such as those of family, unity, modernity, affliction and slavery – that mark Congolese and Tanzanian narratives about their respective passages to democracy. By examining the forgetting and the recapture of socialism in these studies, we gain a broader sense of the myriad uses and expressions of socialism in contemporary milieux.

## AFRICAN POSTSOCIALISMS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The themes addressed by contributors in their articles add a rich comparative focus to existing work in Eastern and Central Europe as well as in China and Vietnam. Some themes echo those in the broader

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literature, and some are peculiar to African contexts, but they call attention to the plethora of issues affected by the post-1989 transitions. For political scientists, anthropologists, geographers and historians, the themes offer opportunities to compare and contrast, over time and space, ethnic and religious responses to the passing of old orders, and reformulations of gender, kinship and family. In addition, they allow us to compare shifts in the nature of work, the conditions of urban and rural workers, the legitimating rhetorics of ruling elites, and popular discourses regarding 'recolonization' and a 'return to slavery' following the turn to the market and the resurgence of the private sector. Although there are important historical differences among the many sites of socialist practice that warrant further research, these findings suggest important parallels with studies on other postsocialist countries and non-socialist countries in Africa. We find, for example, that, like Eastern European countries and Vietnam, formerly socialist countries in Africa are also grappling with market principles and practice, the lack of capital, the language of entrepreneurialism and the growth of consumerism (Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Berdahl et al. 2000; Hann 2002). Moreover, we can identify processes shared with non-socialist African cases, such as transitions to multi-party pluralism, privatization of state-operated enterprises, externally dictated economic interventions, and state fragmentation (Chabal 2002; van de Walle 2002; Hibou 2004; Roitman 2004).

Recognizing that socialism was imperfect, incomplete, failed and resisted, we nevertheless must enquire into what that imperfection and incompleteness translates into in postsocialist circumstances. Do we see a trajectory that is similar across the continent? Of course, there is now the shared experience of neo-liberalism, which as Ferguson notes, not only 'demoralizes economies' but also employs the 'economistic language of the international technocrat' to legitimate its ideological hegemony from Guinea to Zambia (Ferguson 1993: 87). But does a socialist past, however imperfect, suggest an alternative path? Four relevant features emerge from our analysis of African postsocialisms that warrant additional research: (1) institutional legacies in the form of civic organizations, (2) idioms of survival during transition both in discourse and in popular iconography, (3) the recommodification of everyday life, and (4) coercion, discrimination and violence.

In many African socialist countries, as in Europe, China, Cuba and Vietnam, the party became nearly synonymous with the state and the means through which access to the state and state patronage occurred. Like their counterparts elsewhere, many of these one-party states attempted to reorganize social life through the creation of youth groups, women's organizations, trade unions, communal villages, people's shops and peasant associations. Some of these organizations – especially the first three – still exist in many African countries and provide a means of social organization and collective identification that bridges increasingly salient ethnic, religious and class cleavages. Secondly, socialist countries from Eastern and Central Europe to Africa also shared a discourse and iconography of socialism that was grounded

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in certain universal themes – modernism, industrialization, previous exploitation, future emancipation, solidarity, unity, work. They typically used words and images of local resonance, as Sahlström discusses in relation to political posters in Ethiopia and Mozambique, which built on the socialist realist themes of early Soviet propaganda but also employed colours and symbols of cultural significance to their citizens (Sahlström 1990). Contemporary discourse and iconography focuses on some of these same themes, only with newly substituted referents for the previous exploitation, future emancipation and – in the case of Tanzania – the 'self' in 'self-reliance' (formerly the nation or community, and now the individual). Survival remains a leitmotif, as do modernity, family, solidarity, unity and work. Thirdly, the recommodification of everyday life cross-cuts multiple domains from education and property to healthcare, housing and leisure activities. Finally, incidences of both intra- and inter-communal violence and/or discrimination have escalated in postsocialist times due in part to the militarization of African states that Cold War politics enabled, and to the emergence or resurgence of virulent ethnic and religious differences that were formerly contained or camouflaged under socialism.

Taken together, these features suggest that, as in the European cases, postsocialist transition in Africa has produced novel recombinations of the old (socialism) with the new (neo-liberalism) (Stark and Bruszt 1998). These connections and continuities may help to explain some of inconsistencies and asymmetries associated with the effects of neo-liberalism across regions and within countries. Social relations constructed under socialism have not been washed away entirely, and it may not be too far-fetched to suggest that people in certain postsocialist African countries may be better prepared to navigate the neo-liberal transition because of previous experiences with supra-local collective identification. In short, socialism has left institutional, aesthetic, psychological and discursive legacies that African peoples and their governments have rejected, appropriated and reconfigured in order to reflect on the past and to negotiate the terrain of contemporary life.

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