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CONTESTED IMAGES: 'FIRST PEOPLES' OR
'MARGINALIZED MINORITIES' IN AFRICA?

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The title of this conference invites to a debate about terminology and definition. I have chosen as heading for my approach the notion of 'contested images' because I see the debate about concepts as part of a larger undertaking: it is a contestation of meaning as well as of political power. The first part of this paper will join in the debate about the concept 'indigenous', while the second part will trace the emergence of indigenous organizations in Africa. I will try to show how the present historical context presents new options, but also some particular challenges for these organizations.

The concept 'indigenous'

The point of departure – A moral claim

The concept 'indigenous' is increasingly popular but also highly controversial in national and international discourse. As a sociological category it is subject to various definitions. As a legal concept it is only just beginning to find its form. When it comes to implementation, the concept stands out as particularly difficult to handle for bureaucracies. Epistemological and political implications of the use of this term become even greater when applied to an African context.

The legal basis for claiming indigenous status is generally weak. The only legally binding statement about indigenous peoples is found in the ILO convention No.169, which so far has not been ratified by any African country. There is a long way to go before the United Nation's Draft Declaration on the

Rights of Indigenous Peoples is put before the General Assembly, and many African states are among the strongest opponents to the declaration. (Pritchard 2000)

However, the importance of a concern for indigenous issues cannot be measured solely by their weak legal status. They are the most explicit expression of a general trend that has grown over the last three decades or so. This trend is spearheaded by indigenous and human rights organizations, and sustained by networks of cooperation between national governments, and organizations meeting in national and international fora. The very formulation of these international instruments, described by some as 'customary international law' (Anaya 1997), introduces a moral standard and sets a new agenda. This moral standard is *not* a matter of degree, and *can not* be measured in the number of ratifications. In other words; even if the core of the concept is its legal implications, we must also look at its sociological significance.

A few lines from a poem catches some of the universal nature of the topic at hand. It is written by a Finnish Saami, but could easily have been written by a Bushman in the Kalahari:

My home is in my heart, it migrates with me.
What shall I say brother, what shall I say sister
They come and ask where is your home,
They come with papers and say this belong to nobody
This is government land, everything belongs to the state.
What shall I say sister, what shall I say brother . . .
All of this is my home and I carry it in my heart

(Valkeapää 1994).

Before addressing the African context, two points should be noted that are of a more general nature. The first is illustrated by the poem above:

'Indigenous' is a cumbersome bureaucratic concept

We should keep in mind that any procedure for singling out one group for special treatment or affirmative action goes against administrative preferences for clear-cut and unambiguous target groups, and disrupts standard administrative routines for equal treatment. The concept of indigenous peoples is therefore perceived by bureaucrats all over the world as a concept that is inconvenient, diffuse and difficult to handle.

My own country, Norway, provides ample examples of political and administrative neglect of the indigenous Saami population. Up to 1987 the Saami were not recognised as a distinct group within the Kingdom of Norway, instead they were described according to criteria such as language (Saami speaking), domicile (Inner Finnmark, the county with the largest proportion of Saami), or by economic adaptation (reindeer herding) (Mathiesen 1978, Thuen 1995). It took the greatest civil conflict in post-war Norway (the Alta-Kautokeino case in 1981) and a new paragraph in the Norwegian Constitution before the Saami became recognised as a distinct people, and 'Saami' became a legitimate category in the Norwegian administration.

The need to find a *balance* between the general *ideals of equal rights* and equal treatment, and the *special needs* of the minority for protection, is a challenge for all democratic states with indigenous minorities within their borders. It can be seen as part of a broader liberal dilemma about how to handle differences. The Canadian philosopher Taylor (1994) identifies two modes of politics in the public sphere based on the notion of equal respect: a politics of universalism emphasising the dignity of all citizens, and a politics of differences carried forward by the modern emphasis on identity and authenticity as basic values. The danger of a politics of universalism is that it may become blind for differences, and Taylor calls for more 'Politics of Recognition' based on the value of multiculturalism. It is generally the case that the recognition of the special problems, and therefore special needs of indigenous peoples, come about only reluctantly. Few if any governments do initiate such changes, rather they come

about *as reactions to pressure* from organizations, and from political movements (Brantenberg et al. 1995).

Different meanings associated with the term

There are also different meanings associated with the term. Some years ago, when I started to write a study I called *The Inconvenient Indigenous* (Saugestad 1998), my feeling was that the concept was beginning to take on a fairly precise meaning; *not* as a definition of social form, but by directing a clear focus to a specific type of relationship between state and minority. The nature of this relationship has been identified through dialogues and confrontations in a multitude of fora from the 1970s onwards.

However, there is still no universal agreement that the concept *should* or *can* be restricted to this area of international law and human rights. Partly the ambiguity is on the lexical level: The term 'indigenous' is frequently used as an adjective to mean 'local', 'native' and 'non-European'. This is fairly unproblematic when used about e.g. 'indigenous agriculture' or 'indigenous plants'. There is for instance a tradition of research on systems of cultivation that was called 'indigenous knowledge systems' (introduced by Robert Chambers and others in the early 1970s), *long before* the current legal fashion of the term. Clearly it does not make sense to count everyone who is 'local' or 'non-European' as being indigenous in the sense the term is used in the UN and ILO. However, it is not unusual that meaning of a term changes with context, and although the distinction I am making here is rather self-evident, it would help if more writers simply clarified how his/her use of the term 'indigenous' falls within the one or the other tradition.

Epistemological problems have probably been multiplied by the vogue created by the Indigenous Year 1993 and the subsequent UN decade, causing some writers to use the concept without looking into the background. A bit glibly I call this 'to get on the indigenous bandwagon.' A rather notorious example is the theme number of *Current Anthropology* on 'Anthropology and the

Indigenous' in 1998 where an article on 'The Idea of Indigenous People' claims that the concept 'not only breeds intellectual confusion, but ... also provide ideological ammunition to those who would re-order the world according to the claims of blood and soil.' (Béteille 1998:191). The comments convey a general critic of what is perceived as essentialism. However, what is most striking is that the arguments appear quite unrelated to the current debate in international fora, where the term is gaining influence first and foremost a political concept. Maybe most is said by noting that the *most recent* reference used is Redfield from 1956.

An inconvenient concept in Africa

In the global picture, Africa and much of Asia represent special conceptual challenges. If we look at the historical roots of the concept, indigenous peoples are the descendants of those who occupied a given territory that was invaded, conquered or colonized by white, colonial powers. Strikingly similar problems were created in places as diverse as the Americas, Australia, New Zealand/Aotearoa and Greenland. In this global perspective the situation is most clear-cut where white settlers arrived from outside, while some of the most complex relationships are those between original occupants and incoming groups in Africa.

It is more difficult to analyse Africa, but also more challenging. The dominant position of white colonial forces left *all* of black Africa in a subordinate position that in many respects was similar to the position of indigenous peoples elsewhere. In relation to the colonial powers *all* native Africans were (a) first comers, (b) non-dominant and (c) different in culture from the white intruders. Moreover, local people were associated with 'nature' and 'traditional lifestyles', which are common indigenous attributes, in contrast to the control of technology, manufacturing and development, which was associated with the intruders. Thus, the dominant black/white dichotomy in Africa tended to reinforce the notion that all native Africans were 'indigenous'.

The conceptual problems were noted in the report from the first conference on indigenous people in Africa, convened by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) in 1993:

The concept of indigenous people, as applied to the African setting, is a complicated and much debated one. But this is mostly so from the perspective of the decision-makers and those dealing with international human rights issues, and less so when seen by those who themselves claim to be indigenous (Veber et al. 1993:10)

The important difference from the 'classical' indigenous situations mentioned above is that eventually white colonial forces *withdrew* from Africa. Accordingly, many national politicians argue strongly that all Africans are indigenous, or alternatively, that this is a distinction that does not apply to the African continent. Neither position, however, helps us to analyse the complex internal relationships in parts of Africa. Linking the concept with one particular type of colonial situation leaves us without a suitable concept for analysing the same type of *internal* relationships that have persisted *after* the liberation from colonial dominance.

In many African countries, minority ethnic groups have historically occupied inaccessible regions, often geographically isolated and socially marginalized, and with their cultures distinct from the national hegemonic model. These minorities suffer various forms of exploitation and domination within the national economic and political structures that are commonly designed to reflect the interests and activities of the national majority.

The modern, analytical, use of the concept, focuses precisely on this kind of post-colonial and internal relationship. A concept is needed in international law to describe such sections of a population, and their position as indigenous peoples in relation to (politically and numerically) dominant sections. The term 'internal colony' is sometimes used to refer to peoples that will never achieve independent statehood. Unlike the peoples of the Third World who have been able to take control of their territories through strength of numbers, 'the tiny

internal colonies that make up the Fourth World are fated always to be minority populations in their own lands.' (Dyck 1985:1)

The basics of the concept

The conceptual debate we are addressing concerns the attempt to clarify an ambiguous relationship between a modern phenomenon – the sovereign state – and a special type of traditional community, that does not in itself constitute a political entity. Both indigenous organizations and the UN system argue strongly against a very strict definition of who is indigenous. The diversity of peoples and situation is such that a universal definition would inevitably exclude some peoples. Moreover, it is cautioned that many governments may use a strict definition as an excuse for not recognising indigenous peoples within their own territories. And it is argued that a concept such as *Human Rights* is used in a number of extremely important declarations without a very precise definition (Simpson 1997).

I would suggest, however, that in spite of a repeated emphasis that there is no binding definition, the Cobo study, that first introduced the concept to the UN system, has stood the test of time remarkably well. With a few exceptions, I see later studies, recommendations and resolutions in the ILO/UN context very much as being *amendments*, -- clarifying different aspects and exploring its implications in new contexts.

Erica-Irene Daes, as Chairperson-Rapporteur of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, has followed Cobo in highlighting the following elements:

- A priority in time
- The voluntary perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness
- An experience of subjugation, marginalization and dispossession
- Self-identification (Daes in Simpson 1997).

First and foremost, 'indigenous' is a relational term: a group is only indigenous in relation to another encompassing group, which define the dominant structures of the state. The meaning thus depends on context, and is perhaps best seen as a polythetic classification. We can reasonably conclude that the ILO Convention No.169, and the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are rather precise, *not* in a strict listing of criteria and a definition of form, but in a persistent focus on the *relationship* between indigenous peoples and the encompassing national state.

Trying out a relational approach

Some aspects of the academic debate make an interesting parallel to the distinction made by Fredrik Barth in 1969 when he introduced what one could call the 'modern' concept of ethnicity. He argued for a shift of focus in ethnic studies, -- *from group characteristics to aspects of social process.*

With an 'old' concept of ethnicity, ethnic groups were seen as social entities possessing certain fixed cultural properties, often reinforced by popular folk taxonomies. As we well know, linking ethnicity to overt cultural traits lead to endless questions touching the relationship between definition and reification:

- what are the significant markers of ethnicity?
- when markers of ethnicity that are linked to traditions, material culture, system of production, or language, change, does 'ethnicity' as such disappear?
- or conversely: how much change can take place without being construed as 'loss' of ethnicity?

A change to a *relational or processual* view construes ethnicity as those aspects of social relationships where cultural differences are communicated. The change in paradigm made available formal concepts that -- in the words of Norwegian anthropologist Hylland Eriksen -- enabled students of ethnicity to:

discard unsatisfactory empiricist strategies of 'butterfly collecting', to replace substance with form, statics with dynamics, property with relationships and structure with process. (Eriksen 1991:128).

The processual approach, with an emphasis on the socially significant *interface* between groups, rather than content, has made it possible to account for ethnic phenomena with less reification of culture and people. I suggest that we are grappling with the very same type of questions in a discourse on 'indigenouness'. Indigenous peoples are historically situated in an empirical context, in a relationship between a given group and the encompassing nation-state. The core feature of this relationship is a type of recognition from the nation-state -- or rather *the lack of recognition* -- of the distinct background and therefore distinct needs of the indigenous population.

This has implications for the significance of the *dimension of time*. It is not simply the historical fact of annexation or conquest that is significant. Equally significant is the sense of continuity between those living in a territory at the time of contact, and the contemporary descendants. This may be expressed in the continued use of land, but also in a clear sense of having been *deprived* of previous access and use.

This is noted, i.a., by the Saami Rights Commission's sub-committee that considered indigenous land use and rights in the light of ILO convention No. 169 that Norway has signed. Their concern is not for when traditional land use *started*, but when it *ceased*.

For an indigenous population to be entitled to recognition of its rights of ownership and possession to a land area, it is not sufficient that the peoples concerned have once occupied (or used) the area. Both for the recognition of rights of ownership and possession, and the recognition of right of use, it must be required that such rights have continued up until fairly recent times. (NOU 1997 no 5:49).

Elsewhere in the report 'fairly recent time' is defined as practices that have continued into the 20th century.

A similar emphasis on structural features can be found in a report from IPACC (1998), noting:

If Africans had been at the UN table at the start of the UNWGIP process they could have emphasised that the issue is not aboriginality, but rather the on-going particular relationship of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists to natural resource management. This relationship, which is ancient in character and relatively untouched by colonialism, has shaped cultures, languages and identities. These communities have been stigmatised in post-independent African states as backward and unproductive.

To conclude so far: I am suggesting that indigenous, like ethnic, is a *relational* term. A group is only indigenous in relation to another, encompassing group, and thus the meaning depends on the historical context. Moreover, the relationship between a state and an indigenous minority is one of unequal distribution of power. The concept is coined to describe this inequality. It is also designed as a tool to change this inequality. This leads us to the following question:

Is a choice of terminology also a choice of strategy?

Probably, most indigenous peoples do not see the questions of definitions to be the most burning of questions. The core criteria of priority in time, cultural distinctiveness, and an experience of subjugation and marginalization, seem to work well with an emphasis on self-identification as a distinct collective.

Indeed, the brief attempts at logical exegesis above may seem a long distance from the struggle for survival that dominate the lives of many people, particularly those who live in Third World countries. But are questions of terminology a purely academic exercise? I believe not.

The most acute dilemma in many African countries is not how an indigenous group is defined, but the fact that most national governments ignore, reject or are downright antagonistic to the very concept. Why then use this concept as a political argument? Why challenge a sceptical government with the use of a controversial term, if perhaps a term like 'marginalized minority' may be used to single out the most deprived section of a population equally well?

It is a regrettable fact that most indigenous peoples in the Third World -- however defined -- also find themselves in a situation of poverty and deprivation, lacking in resources, scoring low in education, often suffering from bad health, apathy, alcoholism and despair. African governments routinely argue that one should not focus too much on the contentious and abstracts issue of 'indigenouness', but rather address the immediate and concrete situations of poverty. Development organizations, concerned about genuine human suffering may be inclined to agree on this, and play down the political issue. If help can be extended to deprived indigenous groups under the label of welfare programmes, so be it, provided it still reaches the target groups and alleviates a situation of need. Many researchers will argue along the same line, pointing to examples of economic discrimination that could certainly be remedied without calling for an extensive debate on indigenous status.

Whether this is a wise strategy to follow or not depends on the objective. Clearly indigenous peoples problems almost always includes problems of poverty, which can be alleviated by welfare. *But this removes the symptoms, not the cause.* I have tried to demonstrate this in a case study from Botswana, where the government for many years has run a welfare programme called the Remote Area Development Programme. The target group in this case is not identified by cultural or ethnic criteria, but by a listing of social problems that the programme seeks to remedy. In real terms the majority of the target group is made up of Bushmen or San people, but they are not described in terms of the culture, tradition, skills or other specific qualities that they possess. Rather they are identified by what they are lacking: *by not* having a tribal structure with formalized leadership positions, *by not* living in established villages, *by not* speaking the majority language, *by not* having access to a number of resources,

and so on (Saugestad 1998). The design of the programme is that of a welfare programme. It provides some services, assists towards some economic undertakings, and relieves some of the gravest social problems. But it is a programme that creates clients, not empowerment.

Addressing the root causes of the problems the San and other indigenous peoples experience implies a different definition of the situation. It means to challenge the dominant rules of society, whereby culturally specific qualifications and skills are rewarded differently, consistently leaving the minority in a disadvantaged position. The indigenous struggle seeks to change this.

From a certain perspective this struggle, often referred to as the politics of identity, may appear less radical than economic arguments that takes as its point of departure class differences, challenging the economic mechanisms that almost inevitably relegate indigenous people to the bottom of society. However, and paradoxically, a focus on economic deprivation, even class conflict, appear to be more acceptable to many governments, because it easily implies a tacit acceptance of the view that the problem of indigenous peoples is *one of poverty only*. This is also why more neutral term referring to 'marginalized minorities' may be correct enough as descriptions, but still failing to serve as an instrument for social change. The underlying mechanisms of unequal opportunity can never be removed solely by welfare initiatives, but need a change in the dominant political discourse. In Keesing's terminology a counter hegemonic movement is needed, that 'entails a contestation of meaning as well as of political power' (1992:232).

The point is simply that we need to make a distinction between appropriate use of the term, implying a debate on epistemology, and the strategic use of a term, which is a question of policy. It is important, especially in Africa, to distinguish between the relation of subordination that characterises indigenous groups, and the many similar forms of ethnic or tribal discrimination. Groups that are disadvantaged may for a variety of reasons want to be included under the 'indigenous' umbrella, for whatever protection or support this can furnish. It stands to reason that any concept that conceivably might bring about some benefits also may be used opportunistically. It is not helpful, however, to

describe all ethnic minorities suffering from human rights abuse as indigenous. *Being coined as an instrument for redressing certain types of injustice, the concept loses its bluntness if it is being used to describe all types of injustice.*

A state's attitude to its citizens is expressed in its political and legal structures. The conflicting world-views between state bureaucracies and hunter-gatherers or pastoralists can appear as different approaches to land use, differences in the organising role of kinship, differences in traditions for accumulation and consumption, and in the different perceptions of leadership (Barnard 1998). Wherever conflicts of interest over land occur, bureaucratic ignorance about the logic of foraging systems, and the lack of recognition of the legitimacy of non-farming use of land tends to aggravate such disputes. In this perspective, it is not entirely obvious that avoiding the kind of antagonism that the concept of 'indigenous' may evoke from the powers-to-be is the best strategy. The terminology used to describe a given situation also indicates what can be done to change it.

This brings us to the second part of my paper.

The role of indigenous organizations

I believe strongly in the need for representative indigenous organizations. In a comparative perspective we find that the formation of indigenous representative organizations, and the recognition – often grudgingly – of such organizations as legitimate partners in negotiations, represent some of the most successful innovations in the troubled field of relations between nation-states and their indigenous minorities (Thuen 1995, Brantenberg et al. 1995, Minde 1996, McFarlane 1996, Saugestad (ed) 1998). A constructive minority policy can only be developed through consultation, and consultation requires independent, representative indigenous organizations that can negotiate with the governments. Recognition of this condition implies a re-codification of a relationship from one of dominance of one group and subordination of another, to one of mutual respect between different but equal partners. Far from being a threat to political

stability, such re-codification can make a vital contribution to the democratic process.

The emergence of indigenous organizations in Africa should be seen as part and parcel of this global process, striving to gain recognition by national governments of their special concerns. This global process, however, has been going on for some time. By the mid 1990s, the time organizations in Africa started to enter the scene, the changes brought about by this process had significantly altered some of the opportunities and constraints for action.

The historical context

Indigenous organizations started in Western countries, with American and Canadian Indians, Inuit, Saami, Maori and Aborigines among the pioneers. In the early 1970s the World Council of Indigenous Peoples was formed. Regional organizations (Latin America, Circumpolar) soon joined in. This early development of organizations can be divided in two stages. An earlier phase (1960s and 70s) concentrated on *identity politics* and development of selfhood, formulating a claim for the recognition of cultural distinctiveness (Eidheim 1992). For instance, one of the first objectives of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples was to be given status as NGO at the United Nations.

The 1980s and 1990s heralded what we may call a *legal phase*: the preparation of international conventions, epoch-making legal decisions such as the Mabo case in Australia, the recognition of Nunavut in Canada, and national political debates leading, for instance, to Saami parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland. If we look at the 'established' organizations that presently are engaging in dialogue or litigation over land rights issues with their respective governments (in Canada, USA, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand), we see that prior to this stage went a long period of internal mobilization, focusing largely on cultural issues and the development and consolidation of local organizations.

This process -- often referred to as the indigenous movement -- has been instrumental in changing the international landscape. By now there is a process in Geneva around a series of path-breaking initiatives, the UN Draft Declaration and the plan for a Permanent Indigenous Forum among the most important (IWGIA 2000). There is a place in these processes for indigenous peoples to take part. Moreover, public funds and support structures such as Survival International, Cultural Survival and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) provide logistic and financial assistance so that indigenous representatives can participate in the multitude of fora that debate these issues.

The important point to note is that by the 1990s there was a structure in place -- a global meeting place -- with *empty slots*, so to speak, to be filled with representatives from Africa and Asia.

The growth of organizations in Africa has indeed been fast, and the international context of the 1990s has provided significant resources for this process. However, it has also created some *special challenges*, which should be recognized. Compared to their sister organizations of the first generation, African organizations enter the global arena of meetings and confrontations, and seek dialogue with their national governments, without having much time to go through the founding stage of local mobilization, cultural consolidation and capacity building.

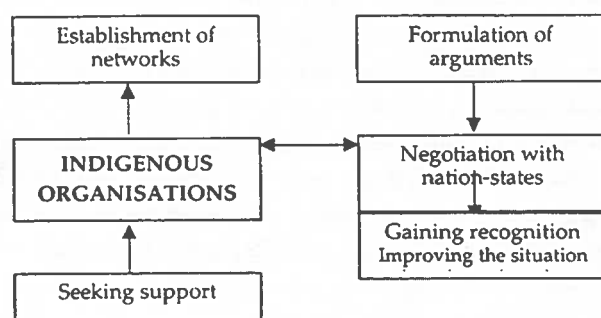
Challenges to leadership

This has led to very demanding and often conflicting expectations directed to these organizations. The emerging leaders have to be actors on many fields simultaneously. While the international context provides a significant support structure, governments will inevitably claim that international involvement show that the national groups are not properly local/authentic/representative. On the other hand, if organizations concentrate on local issues exclusively, local problems will inevitably be codified along socio-economic and welfare dimensions, and governments will argue for a policy of poverty alleviation.

In order to achieve their ends, indigenous organizations must develop relations in three directions: between organizations and the people they represent (the 'constituency'); vis-à-vis the state and its administration that are counterparts in negotiations; and within networks of similar organizations and umbrella organizations nationally and pan-nationally.

The three levels of activity can be diagrammed this way:

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL NETWORKS: WCIP, ILO, UN...



LOCAL LEVEL MOBILIZATION

If we look at the challenges in Africa, we note the similarities in issues and events, compared with other parts of the world. The most noteworthy difference, however, is that the events now appear in a *different sequence* and within a much *shorter time-span*. Indigenous organizations entering the arena of indigenous politics in the 1990s, are (a) immediately supported by an existing international network offering both solidarity and information, which means that they are (b) immediately in a position to address the most complex of indigenous concerns: rights to land and water. They have a particularly difficult task addressing such extremely controversial issues, before the process of local mobilization and awareness raising, and the building of regional and national organizational structures has been consolidated.

In some respects it may be easier to link up with the international network than to develop a strong grass-roots foundation. The kind of 'flying start' the new organizations get on the international circuit helps in many respects, but is not a substitute for painstaking grass-roots mobilization. However, the unremitting pressure on their dwindling land base does not leave organizations with much choice. In Botswana this is dramatized in the controversy over the Central Kalahari Game Reserve; for the First People of the Kalahari and others to fulfil their role as interest organizations, they have to address the issues as they arise, and have little freedom to set their own agendas. In Tanzania the Hadza are facing very similar problems.

To the extent that the speed of events at the turn of the Millennium has overtaken the African organizations when it comes to local mobilization, this is easily leaving them open to accusations of lack of representativity when they raise concerns on the political arena. Precisely *when* an organization or a community-based structure becomes representative is not an easy question to answer. What we know is that at the same time as leaders of the new organizations try to establish a platform for negotiations with national authorities, they have to carry out a dialogue with the constituency they represent, which among other things implies to defend new organizational structures that are essentially 'alien' to the culture they are set up to represent.

Predictably – and especially in cultural contexts where leadership is delegated *ad hoc* and is easily recalled -- the new leaders face a tremendous pressure to justify themselves to their own followers, and to make their strategies appear worth while supporting. They are forever faced with the paradox that in order to defend their own cultural values they have to behave in ways that in many respects break with the norms and values of that culture. The more effective on the national and international scene the less typical, and 'authentic'. Such cases of 'damned if you do and damned if you don't' impose at times a tremendous personal strain on people in leadership roles. Inevitably, role-dilemmas follow, especially in an early phases where new opportunities give rise to conflicting expectations.

Bieseke (1995) has noted a significant difference between the *participatory democracy* practiced by most hunter-gatherers, and the *representative democracy*, on which modern organizations are depending. Moreover, it is a fact that many of the most prominent indigenous leaders have been 'atypical' in that they may have a mixed parentage or some special access to education, that make them especially suited to negotiate between cultures. Charismatic leader of the First People of the Kalahari, John Hardbottle, was a typical example, with a Bushman mother and British father and fluent in two cultures. Somewhat ironically, then, it is by drawing on comparisons with similar processes in other countries that the authentic nature and local justification of contemporary indigenous mobilization appear most clearly (Ngakaaja et al. 1998, Kuru/WIMSA 1999).

The main challenge for organizations is to gain legitimacy. An emerging indigenous organization builds up its position through a cumulative process that requires both support from its core members for establishing a dialogue with the national government, and the recognition from the respective national government as legitimate partners in negotiations. Needless to say, official recognition is the most crucial, but the hardest to get. A government may reject or ignore pleas for dialogue by insisting on following 'proper channels of communication' – with reference to procedures, agenda or choice of arguments. Support from national and pan-national organizations, which may be significant, particularly in an early phase. Recognition won and advantages gained may in turn converted into an increased support from the 'constituency', which again will promote a more efficient and more representative organization that may have more impact in consultations with the state.

Few if any governments have actively supported the initial establishment of indigenous representative organizations, seeing them rather as signs of distrust, or threats to established political structures that reflect the vote of the majority. Once established, however, the common experience is that government find such organizations increasingly convenient partners for the delegation of tasks and as partners in negotiations. One can only hope that African governments will share this experience.

Concluding remarks

My conclusions address the two parts of the paper. First, the initial question: First people or marginalized minorities? The notion of priority in time can easily become a parody if applied too rigidly, and in many cases defining who came first may become an exercise in futility. An emphasis on descent to the exclusion of other criteria lays one open for accusations of racism. My emphasis, and I believe that of ILO and UN, has been on history as it is manifested in the contemporary sociological reality of marginalization in relation to state powers.

Why not, then, embrace the concept of marginalized people? A main concern, which I have tried to illustrate with reference to my own research in Botswana, is the danger of clientization that inevitably follows from a welfare policy. A policy that highlights deprivation and ignores the creative potential of a group's cultural heritage, does not contribute to empowerment. To put it differently, while all indigenous peoples are marginalized minorities, marginalized minorities are not always indigenous peoples. I have tried to show that the strategy for Indigenous Rights makes a claim to legitimacy and authority that is not limited to individual rights in a state context but also involves community rights in an international context. The history of indigenous peoples vary, yet we find the same background factors in new combinations. This explains the sense of unity between very diverse groups who have experienced similar forms of state discrimination.

It comes with the territory that the issue of definition is easier to handle in cases where there was clean-cut white colonial annexation, which is where the indigenous movement has its roots. The intricacies of relationships between various groups and adaptations in Africa and parts of Asia present a different picture. Any attempt to draw a definitional line is unpopular. However, the debate on definitions must include both questions of inclusion and exclusion.

One of the strengths of the indigenous movement so far has been its inclusiveness. The process around the Working Group in Geneva has been a prime example of this. The criteria of self-definition has been cherished, and it is

repeatedly stated that no one shall have the right to control the authenticity of another group. Even the Boers who went to Geneva in 1995 were allowed to speak. Sooner or later, however, the issue of definition has to be addressed, since there is a limit to how inclusive the movement can be without losing its sense of direction. The African context may well be the one that triggers this concern.

We saw a beginning in Geneva in 1998 when special rapporteur Alfonso Martinez recommended that African and Asian delegations should more appropriately submit their grievances to the UN Working Group on Minorities (Martinez 1999). This was rejected both by the delegates and by other members of the Working Group. It certainly served to galvanize the African delegation. However, for the first time ever, a few American Indian groups broke the consensus line, and were prepared to support the recommendation. In some respects this may be more of a danger signal than the Martinez report itself.

The second part of my paper departs from the epistemological discussion and addresses some practical implications of activism. I have tried to show how the new opportunities created by the international indigenous movement also present new dilemmas. Because this process is so crucial, it is also necessary to note the potential vulnerability in the present situation. The fast growth of organizations and international meetings place a considerable demand on the relatively few people in leadership positions. Within the last five years, at least four pan-African organizations have emerged, with an intent to span the continent: *Indigenous Peoples in Africa Coordination Committee (IPACC)*, *Organisation of Indigenous Peoples in Africa (OIPA)*, *Commonwealth Association of Indigenous People (CAIP)* and *African Indigenous Women Organisation (AIWO)*.

There is a danger that the proliferation of organizations may create more positions than there are people to fill them. Donor and support organizations have a responsibility here. Over-zealous support to new organizations may at times tip the balance between the need for diversity and the danger of duplication. The global process asks for participation from Africa in order to match structures developed on other continents. This process has been propelled by a real sense of urgency. The fledgling organizations in Africa have to deal with immense challenges in terms of hostile governments, impossible logistics

and considerable language barriers. International contacts call for proficiency in English and a familiarity with bureaucracy. Dwindling land base calls for land claims. Development projects for income generation call for specialised skills, in production, and even more in marketing. There is no way to stop this process.

It is still the view of African governments that indigenous organizations are not needed. However, the development of the 'indigenous movement' has been compared to the genie that leaves the bottle. Once it is out, there is no way to get it back in. I have tried to present and explain some of the demanding and often conflicting expectations directed to the emerging indigenous organizations. New leaders may take little comfort from my exposition of the paradox that, in order to defend their culture, they have to behave in ways that may break with the traditions of that culture. But basically my analysis is an expression of support. The kind of dilemmas highlighted in this paper should be seen as the outcome of a process situated in history, not as example of personal shortcomings. The fact that organizations exist and leadership emerges against numerous odds is a testimony both to individual courage and to cultural resilience.

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