1st Annual LAGSUS conference

A summary report

Extract from 1st annual report

The first annual LAGSUS[1] conference took place from 22 to 28 August 2004 in Namibia. It provided the opportunity

- to take stock of progress made;

- to present first results;

- to discuss contents, methods and objectives of LAGSUS with fellow scholars and local experts;

- to identify strengths and weaknesses of the implementation so far, and plan accordingly.

A public conference jointly organized with the University of Windhoek (August 23-24) on the theme of the research (*Appendices G-1, H-5*) was followed by a three-day excursion to the main research area of the Namibian subproject, 150 km northwest of Windhoek. This time was set apart for discussing matters of project organization, team building, and for planning. It also provided an opportunity for first hand encounters with the local Herero population which is in the focus of interest of the Namibian subproject.

The annual meeting was attended by all supervisors and permanent researchers except Prof. B. Nothofer (Frankfurt) who regretfully was not able to come. Prof. Dr. Uta Ruppert, Head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Frankfurt, participated as an external reviewer. Her input is reflected at various points in the following report.

There was no intended coincidence of place and time with the historical conference[2] on the Herero genocide which preceded the LAGSUS meeting and which followed the apologies addressed to the Namibian people, and the Herero community in particular, by German Development Minister Wieczorek-Zeul, on August 15, 2004. But the historical links between the German and the South African colonization on the one hand, and the administrative and economical problems of the communal areas of present-day Namibia on the other, cannot be ignored. In the minds of the Namibian public, there is a strong junction between current development and the correction of colonial injustices, perhaps even more than in other parts of Africa. Against this background, a public statement by Mr. Vehaka Tjimune, Vice-Chairman of the NNFU (Namibia National Farmers' Union) and member of the Permanent Technical Team for the Landreform and Resettlement Process of the Government of Namibia,

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[1] LAGSUS: Language, Gender ans Sustainability. The label was chosen along with the Logo by majority vote.
[2] "Decontaminating the Namibian Past", Windhoek, 17-21 August 2004.

which he made at the LAGSUS conference in Windhoek carried particular weight. Referring to the LAGSUS project on the one hand and the local Herero population on the other, he made the point that this project was not of the kind where data are collected on the field and the results used for promotion at home, but that the research carried out in the LAGSUS framework was perceived as a real contribution to the promotion of the people themselves.

The present report encompasses the period between April 1st 2003, the date when the project was approved by the Volkswagen Foundation, until the annual meeting in Namibia. After the *Introduction*, it summarizes the *major activities in the Subprojects* on the basis of the reports submitted by the main researchers. Its purpose is to provide a succinct overview of the current state of the research work and to give reasons for changes which follow partly from project-internal considerations and partly from unforeseen external factors such as socio-political constraints. It recapitulates the scientific and practical implications of the research on the field and presents the factors which affect positively or negatively its progress along the lines of the original plans. The report on the *Sociology and interproject module* higlights interdisciplinary aspects of the research. It is followed by a short summary of *General project activities*.

In the *Conclusion* (to follow), emergent results and hypotheses will be briefly summarized, alongside with priorities for the current research period to the extent to which they are not already covered in the subproject parts.

Appendices (see enclosed -> List of Appendices)