

# Language, Gender and Sustainability (2003-2007)

## *Final Report*

### RESULTS

A further extension generously granted by the Volkswagen Foundation within the budget limits until December 2007 enabled the participants in the project “Language, Gender and Sustainability”, henceforth LAGSUS, to complete essential phase-out activities. These included

- the validation of the results with the local population and institutional research partners in Namibia and Ivory Coast;
- testing applicability in broader contexts of current interest, e.g. HIV-AIDS prevention (H-5.2);
- promotional activities aiming at consolidating long-term effects of the research (G-12);
- the publication of a collective volume on the gender/language/crisis interface in the host country (Ivory Coast; Bearth 2007a);
- the completion of R.M. Beck’s study devoted to the theoretical foundations of LAGSUS research (Beck 2007c), submitted as a habilitation thesis to the University of Frankfurt;
- further project and career related activities (R. Döbel, D.G. Singo, J. Baya);
- translating key documents, thus enabling bilingual access to key results through hard copy and online publication, adding Indonesian sources where this has become feasible (I-11.1);
- advance the double-pronged goal of synthesizing the results and documentation relating to it in the form of a comprehensive publication and corresponding documentation on internet.<sup>1</sup>

The results of the research are summarized here with reference to original main hypotheses, general thinking in the field, and their local perception and impact. The core hypothesis initially attributed a decisive role in ensuring sustainable development to (i) *the local language*, and (ii) *communicative sustainability*, in addition to which (iii) *scope and depth of negotiation* grew out of empirical research. The empirical setting for testing this set of interrelated assumptions was provided by a small sample of populations with distinct ethnic and linguistic identity in Ivory Coast (Tura), Namibia (Herero), Central Sulawesi, and, accessorially, Uganda (Baluli). Sites were broadly comparable to the extent that they were facing similar challenges of economic survival, of scarceness and overuse of resources as well as environmental preservation, in a context where more than one language of unequal status compete for meeting basic communicative needs and for enabling interaction between internal and external agencies. Variation in social, political, economic and environmental conditions had to be taken into account in contextualizing the results and interpreting them with reference to wider concerns arising from changing global agendas as mediated locally through national and regional media, agencies and organizations.

### **Communicative sustainability**

Originally referring to the shift from an exogenous to an endogenous source of an innovative message as a prerequisite to sustainability (Bearth 2000), *communicative sustainability (CS)* has

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<sup>1</sup> T. Bearth, R.M.Beck & R.Döbel (forthc.), *Communicative sustainability and its indicators*. See App. G-8.1 for current state. A publishing agreement with the Lit-Verlag is due June 2008. Rescheduling was conditioned by prioritization of Bearth (2007a), habil. theses Beck (2007c), and Döbel (i.prep.), and an 80-page foundational article (Bearth 2008a) for, respectively, political, academia-related and editorial reasons. *Documentation (G/H/T/S/I-11)*: Central digitalisation/archiving of audio and video recordings for display on [www.mpi.nl](http://www.mpi.nl) was completed till July 2007. Data from the validation phase (summer 2007- ) are currently being processed, and key video sequences edited for display on [www.lagsus.de/results](http://www.lagsus.de/results)

been extended to denote the combined set of communicative factors that affect the adoption and implementation of development-related action, including e.g. control over communicative resources by local actors (“communicative empowerment”), the positive corollary of *communicative dependency* (CD) still characteristic of “Third World” target constituencies.<sup>2</sup>

Originally developed with a strong eye on local language (LL) and its deeply entrenched underrating as an autonomous vehicle of information relevant to development, the notion of CS, as a result of extended exposure to an array of diverse empirical situations during the research period, is now less narrowly<sup>3</sup> centered on the notion of LL, or on arguments for its rehabilitation. Rather CS, for practical purposes, is now being considered as a set of claims, principles and criteria for bringing into balance two competing axioms often viewed as alternatives: (i) one emphasizing the need of a *bridge medium*, usually exoglossic in respect to the local community, for managing linguistic fragmentation at the inter-community level; (ii) the other favoring the *local language* as the default medium for local conceptualization and implementation. While the Ivorian crisis provided an optimal testing ground for the validity of axiom (ii) in the absence of French-supported development (Baya 2008a; Bearth 2008a), its relevance appears plausible in the more peaceful context of terminological innovation and conservancy in Indonesia (Wickl 2008; Bearth, G-9.3d), and as an explicit argument in the battle for recognition of the local language as part of the historically motivated battle for cultural rehabilitation of the Baluli in Central-Uganda (Bearth U-7.4). Among the Herero, CS is tied to processes of institutional consolidation in a context of three-way multilingualism, contradictory historical connotations interfering with practical considerations in choosing between Herero, English and Afrikaans (Beck 2006c).

The usefulness of the CS concept being thus both theoretically and cross-sectionally established, the theoretical status of “CS indicators” turns out to be somewhat elusive in comparison to what is known as “sustainability indicators” in applied development science. Nevertheless, the 15 “factors” conducive to CS tentatively identified (cf. Bearth, Beck & Döbel, forthc.) offer a promising framework for extensive field testing, while three others were proposed for evaluation purposes (Döbel 2006b).

Bundling CS counter-indicators – overdependence on translation and expert intervention, *de facto* exclusion of significant segments of local constituencies from negotiation and decision processes concerning their own resources and livelihood – led to introduce the complementary notion of *communicative dependency* (CD). CD denotes a permanent and pervasive state of deprivation of active and passive control of, and access to, vital communicative resources in which a majority of people particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa are caught, as a consequence not only of linguistic fragmentation, communicative marginalization and ensuing inequality of access to formal education, but primarily as a consequence of the *a priori* exclusion of those means of expression and communication in which they *are* competent, i.e. their native languages. As a corollary of poverty, CD stands in a systemic relationship of mutual conditioning with the latter (Bearth 2008a). LAGSUS research documents the effects of CD in rural areas from the angle of expert-target group communication as well as from the latter’s own perspective (see *inter alia*, Vé Kouadio 2007, for a female local view). As recent extensions of the LAGSUS research concept to

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<sup>2</sup> With significant differences between Indonesia and Africa, as our data suggest (preanalysis of I-11.1).

<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, it never was. See [www.lagsus.de/Project](http://www.lagsus.de/Project) description, p. 25.

the domain of HIV prevention among Kenyan urban youth show, the condition of CD – exposed and at the same time compensated by parallel HIV discourse carrying its own argumentative force - is not limited to rural environments (H-5.2; Beck 2008a).

### **Negotiation, inclusivity and language choice**

As development by definition consists of activities and objectives not limited to the individual but involving society and social change, a social science approach had to be included in the disciplinary setup of the project, and the latter's goals reset to include the elaboration of an interdisciplinary framework where findings and hypotheses relating to the above topics could be meaningfully discussed between the disciplines, including also practitioners of development.

Double hermeneutics (Giddens 2002) – following the sociologist's lead (Döbel 2006b) – emerged as a common methodological basis. It privileges (i) the point of view of local actors, and (ii) a view of the role of language as attributing meaning to human agency in its social context. Understanding development from such a perspective is tantamount to understanding the local actors' understanding of development. Taking a lead from a commonplace in Tura meta-communicative discourse pertaining to the difference between being informed (*wún ma* 'thing hear') and understanding (*wún gí ma* 'matter inside hear'), one may say that sustainable meaning is properly negotiated meaning, in contrast to assumed inherent meaning of words and utterances.

The link between negotiation and meaning goes beyond mere contextualization in that a collaborative process enters into its constitution, adding a social variable to it, which is often synonymous with social cohesion or, as one might prefer to call it, *inclusiveness*. This process tends to be externalized, formalized and institutionalized, as illustrated by the *Kono* of the Tura (Bearth & Fan 2006), the Indonesian *Musyawah* (Wickl 2005a), and by the socio-culturally hybrid meeting organization among the Herero (Beck 2007c). While the Herero case provides rich evidence of negotiation over gender inclusion, the purpose of the *Kono* as a prerequisite to the decision-process is to reach a negotiated understanding of "what is meant". It illustrates well the strategic place of highly formalized procedural infrastructure in oral societies, particularly for negotiating innovation:

1. It legitimizes collective decision and action.
2. Contrary to appearance, its overriding characteristic is inclusiveness, not democracy. Voice is not vote (Singo 2008). In deference to pre-constructed relations of gender-exclusive dominance mainly based on seniority, of which each occurrence of *Kono* is a public re-enactment (Baya, 10.4.2), the last (and decisive) word is with traditional authority. Traces of a possible conflict with Western democratic ideals are found in Herero public meetings, where they are linked to contention over language choice (Beck 2006c). For the appropriation of the *Mushawah* procedure for consolidation of autocratic rule see Döbel (in press).
3. Choice of language accounts for a crucial difference between communicative empowerment and communicative handicap, and, in terms of participation in negotiation, between inclusion and exclusion. Thus, with the explicit argument of optimizing participation and minimizing exclusion, Tura takes precedence over French in the proceedings of a women's association in an urban setting in Abidjan (Singo & Bearth, forthc. In the Herero context, where linguistic choice and the use of writing are used to enhance the experts' power over the commons, the latter react with disagreement and requests for inclusion (Beck 2006c).

4. Independently of explicit choice and reasons for it given by participants – the Tura case is rather exceptional in this respect - our sample in general suggests a double correlation (i) between inclusion and sustainability (human, economic and social), and (ii) language and inclusion/exclusion. Contrary to a commonly held view, inclusion is not merely a matter of being able to “understand” what is being said, but of sharing control of the debate. Given the strong tie between participation in negotiation and commitment to action, this double nexus provides a strong argument for the claim that language is indeed decisive for sustainability in whatever sense this latter term is taken.
5. Martens et al. (2002), in diagnosing large-scale failure of international development cooperation, attribute this to what they call a “broken feedback loop”, a communicative deficit on the part of local recipients of international aid. Results from LAGSUS, while not disproving the economists’ main thesis of a communicative deficit somewhere along the line of transmission, offer evidence for locating the problem in the initial rather than the final phase of the communication cycle, shifting the burden from the receivers’ to the donors’ side. This suggests that investing into full inclusiveness and a “communicative contract” accounting for specific communicative (face) needs of local communities at the beginning of the cycle would pay off by improved feedback at the end - and even before. It is more than doubtful that financial incentives – the recipe proposed by Martens et al. – will lead anywhere without prior compliance with local codes of communicative adequacy and decency.

### **Innovative methodology and tools**

As double hermeneutics is not only interested in what people say but in what they *understand*, the researcher is faced with a double heuristic and epistemic dilemma: (i) How to access interpretation by local people of utterances – their own or those of others - recorded in their idiom? And starting from first order interpretation, how to reconstruct local perspectives on development? As Beck notes, this additional loop in the methodological cycle requires access to interpretive resources not normally controlled by non-native researchers, even if they “know” the language (Beck 2007c). As a result of struggling with this epistemic puzzle besieging anthropological field research since its beginnings, she proposes to achieve theoretical closure by linking insights from the sociology of knowledge to fieldwork-oriented disciplines such as ethno-methodology, anthropology and conversational analysis. Language being the privileged source for socially relevant knowledge, and development in turn being an application of socially determined knowledge, Beck attains meta-theoretical coherence permitting to assign linguistics its logical place in the consortium of sciences considered worthy of monitoring the world-wide enterprise of development - at the cost of shifting this assignment from its preferred descriptive to a less familiar interpretive mode. While descriptive and analytical knowledge of source language data used as initial input remains indispensable, as LAGSUS field experience conclusively shows<sup>4</sup>, the interpretive approach to development, by putting local discourse and local language in its epistemic centre at two levels, the primary actor’s and the researcher’s, compounds risks of bias which cannot be avoided but only shared: Locally mediated research (LMR), drawing in a

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<sup>4</sup> Lack of descriptive and analytical access to local languages has limited access to primary data beyond BI in the Indonesian subproject. In the case of Luruuli, linguistic groundwork had to precede training of transcribers as a pre-condition for accessing primary data highly relevant to development interaction.

systematic way on double conversancy of junior researchers socialized in their native language and cultural presuppositions, is recognized, alongside with the Source text principle (STP), as a formal requirement on Local language hermeneutics (LLH).

As an afterthought to LLH, development semiotics was introduced and documented as a tool for describing systemic properties of development concepts from a local viewpoint as illustrated in Bearth (2008a) with regard to the communicative function of iron roofs, tape-recorders and silence. It provides a framework for integrating terminological aspects, a domain addressed initially in the Indonesian project, using quantitative rather than qualitative methods of inquiry.

### **Local language as a meta-resource for resource management**

The “language as a meta-resource” concept grew out of action-research from 2004 to 2007 in rebel held Western Ivory Coast from close monitoring of discourses of ownership and resilience of local constituencies in the peripheral zone of the EU sponsored Mont Sangbé National Park (PNMS), threatened by destruction in the wake of the irruption of war, a condition that prevailed during the whole research period. It claims in substance that the optimal use of natural and human resources, including those essential for implementing the MDG, depends on strategies of optimization of communicative resources, particularly local language as the default medium. This general assessment fans off into 10 strategic assets of LL, which partially match the initial heuristics laid out as starting kit in the “12 Questions”<sup>5</sup>. Its meta-resource role qualifies LL

1. as an epistemic tool for accessing local analysis in collaborative action-research;
2. as a factor of social cohesion, via language-induced exclusion or inclusion, and therefore, as documented in the case of the PNMS, of group resilience;
3. as a “clearing house” in knowledge transfer between experts and local audiences ;
4. as a privileged instrument in implementing, monitoring and evaluating local development, particularly for reinforcing capacities of self-monitoring and self-evaluation;
5. as a means of appropriation of knowledge, of fostering a sense of ownership and – as a consequence rather than as a condition - ecological conservancy;
6. if supported by anti-hegemonic policy and practice, as a means of bolstering self-esteem;
7. through its promotion, as a factor contributing to overcoming communicative marginalization (of which it is more usually seen as a cause).

Extending its use to the written mode enhances its potential as a means of empowerment

8. by implicitly redefining and redistributing functional roles between competing languages in multilingual settings ;
9. by strengthening reflexive, analytical and managerial capacities of local actors;
10. by changing the role relationship between experts and actors.

Results obtained in these domains vary greatly depending on local conditions, but also measured by requirements of methodological stringency, theoretical viability and empirical reproducibility. A validation matrix in elaboration for the synthesis volume details strength of evidence and strength of validation of these parameters, correlating variation of e.g. (strong/weak) positive vs. negative evidence and/or validation processes with the variables of research conditions in each setting on the one hand, and sociolinguistic, political, historical and economic variables influencing language attitudes and communicative behavior on the other. For example:

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<sup>5</sup> See [www.lagsus.de/resources](http://www.lagsus.de/resources).

- All the above mentioned parameters are positively indexed for Tura homeland and diaspora, with generally strong validation.
- For Herero, 2-4 are positively indexed, but 6 and 7 are not, whereas 9 and 10 seem to be weakly positive on the basis of action-research carried out on behalf of local agencies in the initial phase, pending validation. These variations correlate with destabilizing effects through history within reach of memory affecting language attitudes in the case of Herero (Ohly 1987; Beck 2006\_18), and with unbroken continuity in the case of Tura, reflected in a strongly affirmative mood to its use in preference to any other alternative.
- There is converging positive evidence from Tura and Indonesia on parameter 5 (see Bearth, G-9.3d). While convergence between use of LL, symbolic ownership and adherence to ecological standards is supported from both places, there is no counter-indication from elsewhere. Strong evidence in its favor comes from a PMNS case study (Baya 2008a, forthc.); apparent counter-evidence from one place suggests that economic incentives are not enough to ensure adherence, and thus reinforces the conclusion.
- Social integration based on recourse to local language for negotiating live issues of sustainable development – point 2 - is supported from Herero and Tura, but not from Indonesia. The divergence correlates with sociolinguistic profiles: linguistically heterogeneous populations as in the Indonesian settings marked by migration place emphasis on BI as language of integration even at the local level, paired with a tendency to redefine the roles of LLs in villages around the Lore Lindu National Park. By contrast, the case studies in Herero and Tura both show that in relatively homogenous environments, the local language is the language of integration and hence of successful negotiation within the bounds of the territory where it is spoken as the main language.

### **Generalization and extrapolation**

Within the bounds of legitimate maximization of both strongly and weakly validated evidence, the 10 above-mentioned theses on the relevance of language for sustainability, taken together, represent a definite argument for giving more weight to local language as a key factor in promoting development than is currently the case. This includes actual promotion and investment into enhancing its value as a resource rather than taking it as a mere specimen of linguistic diversity to be documented. The conclusion – and ensuing recommendation to policy makers and practitioners – is (i) to give serious consideration to the use of LL as a default strategy on all accounts, (ii) to consider the various facets covered in the above list as being interdependent but also partially independent variables, implying that contra-indications may apply to one but not the other function (as with point 2 vs. 5 in the Indonesian case). While contra-indications need to be taken into account, their sources must be carefully examined. For whereas socially distributed multilingualism is in general a valid counter-indicator, language attitudes, both negative and positive, are rarely a primary given but tend to be a produce of already existing language policies and entrenched prejudice which, in the interest of sustainability, should be allowed to be experimentally exposed to the test of alternative strategies. If one is ready to consider the Tura case as a possible prototype of such a strategy emerging under conditions unusually free from the burden of colonial and postcolonial mortgage, rather than dismissing it off-hand as deviant, it presents strong evidence in support of a view of communicative sustainability which gives local language promotion its chance and its share in communication for sustainable development.

### **Self-appraisal - unexpected developments and results**

In Ivory Coast, under the onslaught of civil war - whose duration coincided with that of the project - the research took place under conditions dramatically different from those originally planned, in a total vacuum of state government control and of institutionalized development. Locked up in a protracted stalemate of opposing military forces contained by neutral intervention forces, deprived of economic resources, cut off from well-to-do relatives in the diaspora under government rule, the Tura found themselves “prisoners of war”, as one village elder put it on our first visit in February 2005, in their trapezoid-shaped mountainous habitat north of Man: no schools, no functioning roads, no mobility. Doubly alienated, the 240’000 acre Mount Sangbé National Park (PMNS) area, their protein reserve until the late 1990ies, thereafter as a nature reserve forbidden territory, had now become the reserve of warlords exploiting and destroying it at their whims. The heuristics of the “Twelve Questions”, originally devised for scanning communicative variables in agricultural extension projects now in jeopardy, had to address a situation which, in the midst of political and military conflict, also meant a radical crisis of development and social stability. Following the breakdown of the dual-gender economy and of adaptive mechanisms for coping with temporary poverty, such as the inter-gender credit system (Bearth 2008a), gender issues became the subject of open debate first locally, then at the 2<sup>nd</sup> LAGSUS colloquium organized on May 18, 2006 at the CSRS with participation of academics, NGO’s and Tura civil society, and finally, of the first book-size LAGSUS publication in Ivory Coast (Bearth 2007a; Abstract: T-6.2). Assembling contributions from 10 researchers, 4 of them native Tura associated with LAGSUS and 4 others Ivorian, the publication is also a first illustration of LMR research strategy in print. The paradox of feminine public discourse abstention is brought into full relief through the crisis: Why do not the women, excluded from public debate and decision-making in traditional Tura society, but now fully in charge of local survival economy, take advantage of this opportunity to claim their rights? Why do they not seize the favour of the moment to escape from what observers might call *their* prison? The non-negotiability of gender-based religious taboo is one answer (Guéli 2007), women’s reliance on indirect verbal strategies for promoting social change and innovation (Beck 2007b) is another; Tura diaspora women’s attempt to expand their influence on matters of village development through subtle reinterpretation of kinship terminology is a case in point (Singo & Bearth, i.p.). Is the Tura case, given its circumstances, exceptional or paradigmatic? The institutional vacuum engendered by the war provided a litmus test for CS, with positive results as far as the resilience of ecological ideology in the face of the destruction of PNMS (Baya, *passim*) is concerned. It also provides the experimental frame for extended research collaboration – since 2003, video-documented from 2005 onwards - with remote local populations under “failed state” conditions. The transition from victim mentality to a renewal of actor perspective, pre-dating the official end of belligerence by almost two years, thus favoured a “reset” of the local agenda of development for which research collaboration with LAGSUS has been credited by local actors. In compensation for the missing project context, action-research coupled with a conceptual shift from subjection to the inoperative French-plus-translation frame to a local-language-plus-writing frame as a basis for new initiatives, this experience provided the empirical background for local

analysis by participants in the validation process at FELETO (documents forthc.), by explicitly and spontaneously contrasting the key theorems CD and CS in plain Tura language. In this and other respects, the conclusions from the seemingly exceptional case of the Tura are essentially congruent with the LAGSUS paradigm as it emerges by relating them to results from other sites. Under the prototype hypothesis, the difference between the sites reduces in essential points to the fact that the crisis throws underlying and sometimes suppressed tendencies into sharper relief. Development as a learning process was emphasized throughout the validation phase in both the Herero and the Tura settings. Concomitantly, LL predominance emerged as an indispensable ingredient for making such learning processes inclusive and sustainable. Diomandé FAN, originally associated with the Tura subproject in his region of origin but re-assigned by his employing agency to the Baluli in Central Uganda to a classical triadic situation of development communication (Fan 2007), is currently converting his field experience as an extension worker into a PhD on “learning organization” in progress at the University of Kassel (dir. M. Fremerey).

### **Benefits from interdisciplinary and international cooperation**

The sociological component contributed in numerous ways to stimulate and orient the research as a whole and to shape its methods, as appears from Part 1 above. On several trips RD visited the sites in Indonesia, Uganda and Namibia, and once the Ivory Coast for a sociological seminar (S-7.3). Unfortunately, the German post lost his passport so he was unable to attend the Tura festival on language and reconciliation (FELETO) in September 2007 as external expert at the public validation of the results of LAGSUS action-research. His role throughout the project included drawing attention to the relevant issues and sources in the global debate, particularly with reference to the MDG. Insights obtained from empirical work in the different LAGSUS sites were re-contextualized to become interpretable in the terms of global issues, notably but by no means exclusively, in terms of the balance between environmental and economic sustainability.

Thanks to repeated access to most subproject settings, RD was able to propose non-trivial generalizations on issues related to poverty, land tenure, and resource management as locally perceived, using mostly data from his own research in each location. Though not easily accommodated in discourse-analytical concepts favoured by the more discourse-oriented researchers, he succeeded, evidence from data helping, in demonstrating the need for incorporating “trust” as a viable concept into their analysis. His inquiries into the effect of quality of leadership on sustainability, somewhat indirectly related to basic LAGSUS concerns, became the theme of his habilitation thesis at the University of Munster (Döbel, i.p.).

A recurrent topic of interdisciplinary debate was the question of what constitutes “data” for sociologists and linguists or discourse analysts, respectively. RD comments: “It is true that we failed to come to a full agreement of what would constitute “the same set of data”: it seems that for linguists full transcriptions would provide a sufficient “set of data” for analytic purposes, while the sociologist insisted on data external even to spoken words in order to fully understand the meaning of recorded speech events. This, however, is a natural tension between the disciplines of linguistics and sociology and we managed to at least correctly identify this tension at various points in the workshop discussions.”

### ***Other cooperations***

Partnership with the *Centre Suisse de Recherche Scientifique* in Ivory Coast, apart from facilitating research on both sides of the armistice line cutting the country into two parts, provided opportunities to interact with sociologists and researchers from the natural sciences through

- *Colloquia* (12 Feb. 2004 on the general theme of the research project; 16 May 2006, on changing gender attitudes in the context of crisis, Bearth et al. 2007a.) which also became rallying points for researchers from the University of Cocody and Tura civil society;
- Technical *consultancy* in the LAGSUS-monitored women's cassava project in Abidjan's peri-urban zone (AGRA).

Similarly, the annual LAGSUS conferences in Namibia (August 2004), Germany (November 2005) and Indonesia (September 2006) provided opportunities for broad exchange involving mostly linguists and representatives of the social sciences, but also (in Indonesia) historians.

Sporadic exchange with Iranian sociologist, Dr. E. Nercissians, Univ. of Teheran, provided a stimulating complementary view on understanding local sense-making of development from the angle of its cultural dimension (Nercissians & Fremerey 2008).

### **Lasting effects and further prospects**

***Capacities.*** Habilitation is under way in the case of R.M. Beck. R. Döbel: draft in progress.

For D. Fan's PhD coming out of fieldwork in Uganda, see preceding section.

In Ivory Coast, 3 of 5 local researchers (of whom 1 is a technician) pursue their academic career building on their LAGSUS research experience. This includes a doctorate on Oral tradition and Development (D.G. Singo, DEA certificate in March 2008) and 2 completed M.A. memoirs on LAGSUS-related themes (J. Baya, 2004; L.Vé Kouadio, submitted). Remains the search for a discipline willing to host interdisciplinary graduate studies combining language and development. Meanwhile, an application for a Swiss-Ivorian PASRES grant (see [www.csrsc.ci](http://www.csrsc.ci)) has been submitted for two researchers (Baya, Singo).

***LAGSUS as a local institution.*** Local actor groups, led by CODIV, have expressed their wish to continue research cooperation of the kind established through LAGSUS beyond its termination.

***Development agencies/Consultancy.*** Practical application to programming and evaluation of HIV-AIDS prevention programs of GTZ, puts the LAGSUS approach to test for getting better insights into local processes of development. Analysis of linguistic practices and media reception are taken as a diagnostic instrument for assessing the efficiency of prevention programs (see Beck & Löttsch 2007; Beck & Ogechi 2007; Beck 2008a/b). GTZ is highly interested in including this view into their quality assurance management: *Framework for quality management of the JIC – worldwide*. Frankfurt. MS. 88pp. (See Beck 2008b.)

### ***LAGSUS in academic teaching***

The LAGSUS approach and its results were regularly included in academic teaching at the Univ. of Frankfurt from WS 2003 to SS 2008, and sporadically in Hamburg (R.M. Beck), resulting in active participation of students in some aspects of the research (S. Ermisch, B. Böcker).

### **Contribution to the Programme “Key issues of the Humanities”**

The significance of the research in addressing a key issue of the Humanities may be gauged by its ability to define, for the domain selected for study, their contribution to major concerns of society, among which development no doubt figures prominently. In regard to the latter, its purpose was to define the place of human language in the design of development strategies satisfying global standards of sustainability, as formulated in the Declaration of Rio in 1992 and maintained under the provision of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

The LAGSUS approach can be described as participatory research allied with an epistemology based on local language. Participation may mean many things to many people - in the LAGSUS

approach it means that local analysis is given epistemic priority over analysis based on scientific hypotheses.<sup>6</sup> This order of priority applies to any subject matter or domain, independently of its disciplinary locus, be it the local definition of poverty (Tura), accountancy (Herero), or the balance between economic and ecological sustainability in the vicinity of nature reserves (Indonesia, Tura). The priority given to local analysis explains why empirical research in LAGSUS privileges local language and discourse as sources of primary data. Just as local knowledge is implicit, so local analysis, which is not identical with it but shares its presuppositions, is indirect - it requires *interpretation*. Linguistics and its derivatives, e.g. discourse analysis and semiotics, become key factors for understanding conceptualization and negotiation in any field of human activity. Proof procedure requires the possibility of going back to primary data; this is why the source text principle (STP) is central at this juncture of Third world studies – as it was as a methodological asset in reconstituting the field of humanities in the Renaissance. LAGSUS, by opening the pathway just sketched, bridges the gap between a field of key competence of the humanities on one hand – methodologies of the sciences of language, with social interaction in their scope – and development on the other, a domain of inquiry still largely dominated by technical and economic thinking. Yet, synergies resulting from this bridging effect are well motivated from the vantage point of development research, as its practitioners, sensitive to its social aspects, increasingly recognize that development concepts are processed locally according to local viewpoints, and expressed through local discourse, and that explanations of success and failure, and hence of sustainability, always have at least a strong local component. The following claims may be made on behalf of the LAGSUS approach:

1. Reliable observation and analysis leading to such explanations and corresponding solutions require a blend of methodologies including the one developed for LAGSUS;
2. By locating population samples and actors on an axis having communicative dependency and communicative sustainability as its extremes, LAGSUS offers an analytical matrix for explicating intuitive statements such as the World Bank's plea for the voices of the poor to be taken into account in giving local substance to the MDG (WRD 2004).
3. LAGSUS may be credited for having addressed these and similar communicative concerns at the empirical level in a methodologically coherent, rather than in a merely anecdotic way, showing the importance of the language gap in the eyes of local people, documenting language as a factor of inclusion or exclusion its value as a meta-resource as which it can and should be optimized for better use of *all* resources, thus giving some substance to the "language as resource" discourse of sociolinguistics.

**Media and press:** see Appendice G-12.

**Supervision:** Though not usually directly involved in the research, all supervisors participated in periodic meetings (17, and in addition 2 retreats) and helped shape research strategies. Advice was given on ethical questions, e.g. as to how to deal in a scholarly manner with local conflict.

**Follow-up queries:** After all, is sustainable development ethnic? Are economic effects of a LAGSUS approach measurable? Can its axiomatization make it applicable to other fields?

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<sup>6</sup> This is itself a meta-scientific hypothesis, derived from the theorem of Double hermeneutics. Also circularity due to the fact that it is the scientist who says what local analysis is needs to be taken care of.

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