

East African Social Sciences and Humanities Publishing: A Handmade Bibliometrics Approach

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Overview

Project Background

Aim

Facts on East Africa

Derivates

Bibliometrical Sub-project

Aim

Prerequisites & Method

Preliminary Findings

Kenyatta University Library, Kenya

Photo: Book Aid International

Research Questions

Working title of PhD project:

How International is Academic Knowledge Production?
SSH in East Africa from a European Perspective

- ▶ How are semantics of “international” academia constituted?
- ▶ What role does this discourse play for scholarly communication?
- ▶ How is this discourse observed by “peripheral” researchers?

→ First, I need to know more about “peripheral” research!



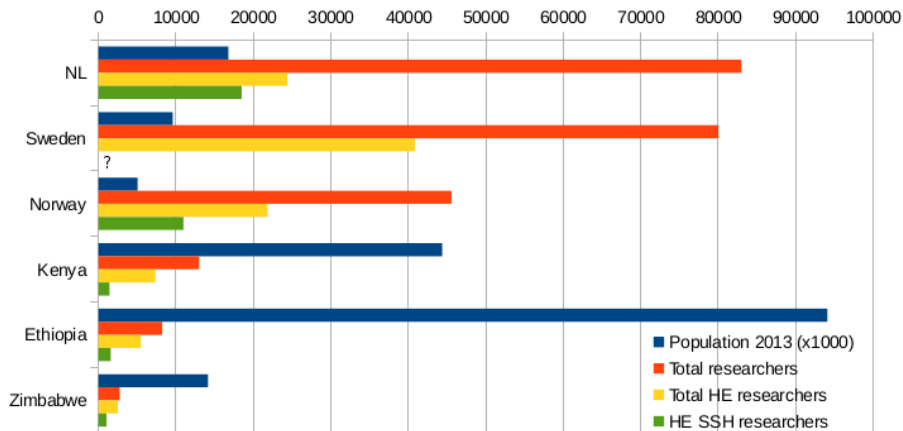
Orientation: Eastern Africa (EA) and its SSH

- ▶ 19 countries (by UN def.)
- ▶ Mostly English official lang.
- ▶ ~25 research universities with SSH departments
- ▶ None is ranked by CWTS, ARWU, QS, or THE
- ▶ Population in 2013: 373M
- ▶ Compared to Northern + Western Europe: 292M





Few researchers?



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://data.uis.unesco.org>, 11 May 2016.

Can we ignore this research?

No! Science studies ought to observe ...

- ... SSH emerging as (questioned) postcolonial phenomena
- ... consequences of destructive 1973-1999 World Bank policies
- ... implications of overseas funding (70-90%)
- ... the construction of researchers' identities—made difficult
- ... values and obstacles of local publishing infrastructure

Aim of Bibliometrical Sub-project

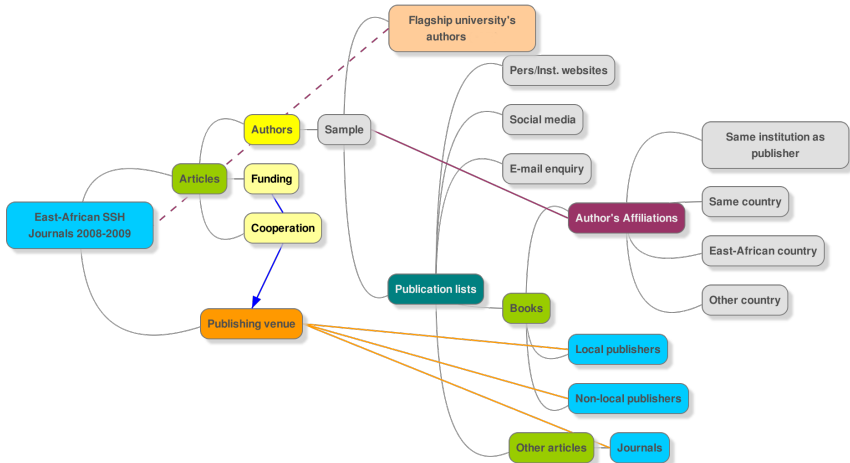
Description of:

- ▶ Local “publishing landscape” for SSH basic research
- ▶ Distribution of respective authors
- ▶ Indexing situation
- ▶ Non-local publishing venues for EA authors
- ▶ Citation networks
- ▶ Publication strategies

Prerequisites

- ▶ Key medium: print journal (Smart and Murray 2014)
- ▶ Quarterly Index to African Periodical Literature (QIAPL)
- Main data source; discontinued in 2011
- ▶ African Citation Index (Nwagwu 2010) did not materialise
- ▶ Badly indexed work *can* have citation impact (Tijssen 2007)

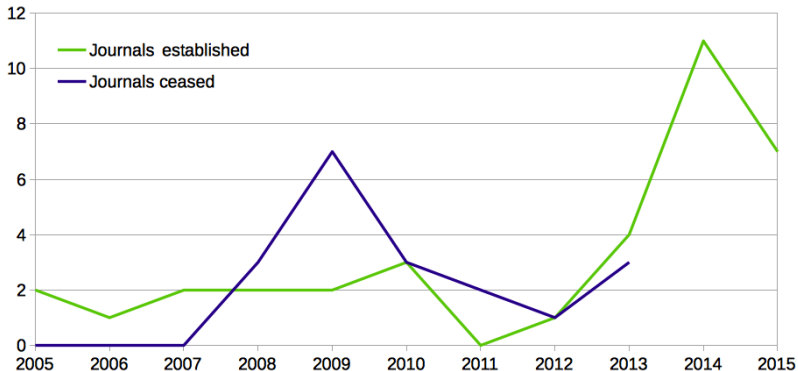
Workflow



Journal Selection

- ▶ Criteria: started after 2005; active 2008-2009; basic research
- ▶ QIAPL is the only source for article metadata
- ... but lists only $\frac{1}{5}$ of Ulrichsweb's filtered "Scholarly" journals
- ▶ 14 additional relevant journals found in QIAPL
- Final selection of 26 journals (from 13 countries) of which ...
 - ▶ 5 are in Ulrichsweb, but not labelled "Scholarly"
 - ▶ 12 are labelled "Refereed/Peer-reviewed"
 - ▶ Only a third is actually active as described in Ulrichsweb
- ▶ Access: 19 print-only, 4 AJOL, 2 OA, 1 MUSE

Journal dying during financial crisis – recent journal growth



Ceased journals from final selection of 26 (Ulrichsweb and QIAPL), compared to newly established journals according to Ulrichsweb, 95 journals filtered by discipline.

Indexing

- ▶ None listed in Web of Science or Scopus
- ▶ Google Scholar: Out of 376 articles, 49 cited
- ▶ 10 journals at some point indexed in ProQuest & EBSCO DB
- ▶ Often stopped because the journal paused
- ▶ Discontinuity can often be explained by political events

Concluding Remark

Bad coverage of the few East African SSH journals
by main bibliographic databases

- Manifestation of a **hegemonic bias**
- Corresponding bias of research

Thank you for your attention!

Questions and comments welcome ...

References

Nwagwu, W. E. (2010). "Cyberating the academe: Centralized scholarly ranking and visibility of scholars in the developing world". In: *Journal of Information Science* 36.2, pp. 228–241. DOI: 10.1177/0165551509358482.

Smart, Pippa and Susan Murray (2014). "The status and future of the African Journal". In: *The Future of the Academic Journal*. Ed. by Bill Cope and Angus Phillips, pp. 401–424.

Tijssen, Robert J. W. (2007). "Africa's contribution to the worldwide research literature: New analytical perspectives, trends, and performance indicators". In: *Scientometrics* 71.2, pp. 303–327. DOI: 10.1007/s11192-007-1658-3.

Supplemental data file: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.161541>