Tracing Frantz Fanon´s African connections

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Introduction: the travelling theories and the spatialization of memory

- Fanon worked as a psychiatrist during the 50’s and 60’s when the first African countries became independent.
- He was an ambassador in the sixties in Africa creating relations between African leaders and political movements in order to create the conditions for a real emancipation.
- **Time / space (dis)connections** as his theories were still used by some African leaders in the eighties.
- Travelling theories (Said, 1999) were developed in the eighties in social sciences, they have relevance to detect the Fanonian resonances nowadays (Kipfer, 2007).
Introduction: the travelling theories and the spatialization of memory

• Fanonian perspective: no violent social eruptions. How to decolonize the mind (reempowering, rehumanizing the African psyche) (Martin, 2012: 121). The colonization of the mind is a characteristic that is current in contemporary African societies.

• Distinction between post-colonial as a temporal frame and realities that reflect coloniality. Fanonian perspective stresses the need to de-link with the colonial. Colonial discourses on Africa (President Sarkozy on the « African man », 26 July 2007)

Methodology

• Critical Discourse analysis (a set of fanonian reminiscences in official political speeches).
• 1st Speech of Léopold Sedar Senghor (1906-2001) in Addis Adeba on 22 May 1963 (Meeting of 32 African Heads of State and Government calling for a strong Union of Independent African States) – 2075 words-
• 2nd Speech of Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972) in Addis Adeba on 24 May 1963– 3815 words-
• 4th Speech Samora Machel – 6930 words – The Beira speech (14 June 1975)
Frantz Fanon (1925-1961)

- Fanon had Césaire as a teacher. At the end of the war, he also supported the political campaign of Aimé Césaire.
- Exposed to a *bourgeois* background and a well-integrated family, Fanon’s life developed a political consciousness and formed his view on the impact of colonization – bringing him (ideologically) closer to Césaire (Gibson, Beneduce, 2017+our own presentation 2018).
Some important works of Frantz Fanon

- *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952)
- *L’an V de la Révolution algérienne* (1959)
- *Pour la Révolution Africaine* (1964)
- Various publications on Psychiatry
The political message of Frantz Fanon

- Fanon perceived the colonial system as a deep system of domination always in favour of a specific category. You are white because you are rich and you are rich because you are white. Monopole of power.


- Risk for Fanon: the decolonization could be a collusion between a national bourgeoisie and a colonizing bourgeoisie that could perpetuate the colonial rule (Jinadu, 1976: 612).

- Fanon experiences colonial racism in Fort-de-France in 1940. After the defeat of France in 1940, many French citizens travel to Fort-de-France and import the structures of French colonialism. This experience provoked the revolutionary consciousness of Fanon. Even when black people succeeded in their studies, they were perceived as Negroes, which means an inferior race (Haddab, 2004).
The Fanonian perspective

• The continual shifting between politics and psychiatry, between the social and the subjective, between the unconscious and history, is one of the most original features of Fanon’s work.
• In his thesis, he linked three dimensions of alienation: the subjective, the cultural, and the political.
• In the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks* he also emphasized that “alongside phylogeny and ontogeny, there is also sociogeny* (Fanon 2008: xv).
• Fanon underscores the situatedness of his analysis – in strong contrast to the structuralist theorists of his time
The tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

- Discourse / Doctrine (Foucault, 1971). Doctrine: corpus of ideological references that refer to each other
- Studying the implicit interdiscursivity (like the literary interplay)
- «Language is a part of society: linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena» (Fairclough, 2015: 56)
- The Othering (Van Dijk, 2006) in the political discourse
Senghor / Nkrumah in 1963

• Senghor is not a Panafricanist leader but he had views on **African Unity**. The current perception of Senghor and his role in the construction of Francophonie might give a false view on how he acted during the sixties. The question of travelling memory should not be the projection of anachronisms.

• Senghor and Nkrumah had paradoxically similar views on the African Unity. Nkrumah attempted to play the game of economic development with good relations to the former colonial power. He recognized later on the illusion of this position with the problem of cocoa prizes that were in fact totally controlled by colonial powers. Senghor maintained good relations with France and engaged himself in Francophonie to reach balanced diplomatic relations.
Samora Machel/Nkrumah
Frelimo/Fanon

- The first Frelimo leader Eduardo Mondlane (1962) had ties to Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere – an intellectual with a PhD from the USA - the first Mozambican with this degree – a very important link to other African liberation movements and political leaders in the emergent independent nations.

- Very strong ties between Frelimo and the CONCP (1961) – the organization of liberation movement in Portugal’s colonies in Africa – initially led by the Mozambican intellectual Marcelino dos Santos – who travelled regularly to Algeria, Tunisia and the Morocco. This enabled contact with Amilcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto etc. who shared the strong links to Nkrumah and Fanon and other main intellectuals and politicians.

- First guerrilla fighters went to Algeria for military training in the 60s and returned to Tanzania to be in charge of military training. Connections with the FNL, Fanon, Sartre
Nkrumah 1963, the « Othering » process

- « Our objective » / **African union**
- « We must unite »
- « a continental Union of African States »
- « A whole continent », « the requisite superstructure »
- « The united act of a united Africa »
- « our economic independence »
- « political kingdom » / « our combined planning »

- « struggle against colonialism »
- « humiliating neo-colonialist controls and interference »
- « the end of colonialist and neo-colonialist domination of Africa »
- « by hobnobbing with colonialism »
- « under colonial rule »
- « the symptoms of our troubles »
- « stock exchanges » (Africa’s gold, diamonds, uranium, platinum, copper and iron ore »
- « the foreign powers »
Nkrumah 1963, the « Othering » process

- « common purpose, common planning and common enadeavour »
- « a true political union of all the independent states of Africa »
- « an All-Africa Committee of Foreign Ministers »
- « Ghanaians, Guineans, Egyptians, Algerians, Moroccans, Malians, Liberians, Congolese, Nigerians »

- « fatal relic of colonialism » (frontiers)
- « the former colonial rulers »
- « our continued disunity »
- Not like the « Organization of American States »
Nkrumah, 1963

• « So many blessings flow from our unity; so many disasters must follow on our continued disunity ».
• « Our people call for unity so that they may not lose their patrimony in the perpetual service of neo-colonialism ».

Very diplomatic speech.
• The « Othering » is easy to use to mark an alternative: either African unity or colonial rule.
Senghor, 1963

• « l’Africanité », « l’ensemble des valeurs africaines de civilisation ». Insistence on cultural diversity of Africa

• The consciousness of a common cultural community. The construction of the « Civilisation de l’Universel »

• Development. « un « homme développé » » parce qu’il aura consciemment cultivé, en lui, corps et âme, toutes les vertus de l’Africanité ».

• Union of Regional organizations (Africa is divided into zones)
The Othering process in Senghor’s speech

- "nous méditions les exemples européens et américains"
- Chart of the Organisation (ground values, specific rules)
- Common African market
- Political independence of all the States in Africa
- Les "micro-nationalismes"
- The risk of uniformity (versus the cultural diversity of Africa)
- Mention of the colonial rule ("régime colonial")
- Against Portuguese and South African colonialisms
Senghor’s speech

- Othering process is limited. We have to go over the obstacles ourselves. Mentions of colonialism but the will has to be found in Africa
- Constitution of an intergovernmental organization of African States. (Confederation and maybe Federation after a while).
- Senghorian vision of the African unity is like the current political organization of Francophonie
- Mention of the economic challenges (Fanonian reminiscence: the colonialism does not end with the independence of African States)
- A culturalist vision which is promoted (Senghor does not refer to the mandate that he has in this conference contrary to Nkrumah)
The « Othering » process in Machel´s speech (1975)

• Speech held a couple of months preceding independence (June 1975) in Beira (see info)
• We / the people / employees /oppressed/colonized
• The Mozambican people
• « Let us build a revolutionary and exemplary society »

• Centre of terrorism. « the true gangsters », the « true bandits », the « true brigands »
• « Colonial-fascist government of Salazar »
• « crime against humanity »
• « We lived separated in our country »
• « the whole colony »
• « terrorist organisations »
• « puppets », « marrionettes »
• « agents of imperialism »
Radical othering in Machel’s speeches

- Irony / « All humans, all humans of all races, come from monkeys. It was the development of work that produced humanity »
- « They are here ». « We defeated Portuguese power because, first, it practiced racial discrimination. It was isolated, the Portuguese power, all over the world, first in Europe ».
- « Hitler, in 1939, launched – he mobilised the entire force of the German people, saying that the German represented the superior race in the world – he launched a war against Europe. And all those Whites, all of them, were from an inferior race ».
- « Colonialism is a cancer that destroys humanity, it is a cancer that feeds from blood. Killing, massacring, assassinating, humiliating – it destroys the lives of human beings »
- « Colonialism also classified professions by colour. Professions had colours »
Sankara (1984)

- Colonization of African minds. « On recherchera en vain depuis les concepts de négritude ou d´ « African Personality » marqués maintenant par les temps, des idées vraiment neuves issues des cerveau de nos « grands » intellectuels ».
- Critical denunciation of neocolonial links. « Nos professeurs, nos ingénieurs et nos économistes se contentent d´y adjoindre des colorants parce que, des universités européennes dont ils sont les produits, ils n´ont ramené souvent que leurs diplômes et le velours des adjectifs ou des superlatifs ».
- Critics of the aids granted by the European States
The Othering process in Sankara´s speech

- We « people of Burkina Faso »
- We promote a new social model based on equalities of conditions
- Palestinians / empathy with many peoples (Afghanistan, Nicaragua, East Timor…)
- American Revolution (Best good practices in decolonial experiences)
- Russian revolution of 1917
- People´s fight for liberation
- More financial resources for the protection of the environment instead of investing in the conquest of the space.

- Haute-Volta
- All the system of exploitations
- Ghettos / Gender inequalities
- Slavery
- Show-business / Unemployment
- Ancient international order
- (« A bas la réaction internationale! A bas l´impérialisme! A bas le néocolonialisme! A bas le fantochisme! »)
Sankara´s speech

- Dramatization of the speech (Intensity with climax / anticlimax)
- More addresses to the « President », « Monsieur le Président »
- Mark of the new ideology « La Patrie ou la mort, nous vaincrons! »
- « trafic des concepts ». Colonization of the mind: import of colonialist values and references. Mixture of senghorian aspects (négritude) and fanonian concepts
Typology of « Othering » processes (*repertoire*)

- Radical othering (Machel, 1975) Anticolonial discourse (Strong Fanonian reminiscence)
- Revolutionary Othering (Sankara, 1984). Explicit othering
- Political construction (Nkrumah, 1963) Balance between Othering processes and the affirmation of a « we »
- (Senghor, 1963) Almost No othering (implicit othering). Core values of *africanité*
Fanonian traces today

- Mozambique is the new eldorado – resource curse – neoliberal orientation - new colonialism? – New scramble for Africa
- EU Summit wants to change from an aid model to a model of investment, particularly with the private sector.
- Guebuza message: Africa is aware of its problems, Africa addresses the problems, **EU has no magic solution for Africa** Strong non-interference in politics and – investment in private sector projects with mutual rentability - to fuel development
- Fanonian reminiscences:
  - Fanon, in the damned of the earth warns about the new bourgeoisie – the political and economic elite - reproducing the colonial system. Insufficient de-linking has taken place
- Clear Fanonian message: Africans want treatment as equals – Africa finds solutions in Africa
Conclusions

• These leaders were real intellectuals and tried to be African Founding Fathers with different views on African unity (Federation, Association).

• Among these leaders, only Senghor had not a Panafrcianist view as he maintained good diplomatic relations.

• Difficulties to build a new African unity outside colonial powers. The unconscious references to Fanon show that the white masks were reused in those countries. The Othering processes in their discourse was not enough to build a common conciousness in the African countries.
Conclusions

• Analyzing the « Othering » processes. The Othering forces: the colonial powers and the transformation of the colonial links.
• Focalization on the colonial structures when the common fight needs to be reinforced.
• Balancing between Othering / Sameness linguistic markers.
• Fanonian reminiscences in the systematic way of de-constructing the colonial chains.
• The question of African unity is a common topic among Panafricanists and other leaders.
References

References