

Navigating Epistemic Sovereignty

*A Qualitative Analysis of the Challenges and Prospects for African Studies Research in Senegal
(2000–2026)*

Aminata Diop¹

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Dakar

Correspondence: adiop@aol.com

Received: 04 January 2018 | Accepted: 01 March 2018 | Published: 10 April 2018 | DOI:

[10.5281/zenodo.18944321](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18944321)

ABSTRACT

The decolonisation of knowledge production remains a critical issue within African Studies, where research agendas and methodologies are often shaped by external epistemic frameworks. This creates a tension between global academic discourse and the pursuit of epistemic sovereignty within the continent. This study investigates the specific challenges and prospects faced by scholars conducting African Studies research within Senegal. It aims to analyse the structural, institutional, and epistemological barriers to locally-led knowledge production and identify pathways for strengthening endogenous research capacity. A qualitative, multi-method design was employed, comprising in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a purposively sampled cohort of established and early-career researchers. This was supplemented by a thematic analysis of institutional policy documents and research project proposals from major academic institutions. A dominant theme was the pervasive influence of external funding priorities, which was reported by over 80% of interviewees as significantly distorting research agendas away from locally-identified needs. Researchers described navigating a complex 'dual allegiance' to both international publishing standards and community-relevant knowledge systems. The pursuit of epistemic sovereignty in Senegalese African Studies is a fraught but active process, characterised by negotiation within asymmetrical global knowledge economies. Institutional legacies and funding dependencies continue to constrain autonomy, though identifiable spaces for strategic agency exist. National research councils should establish dedicated funding streams for community-prioritised research themes. Universities must integrate critical pedagogy on epistemic justice into postgraduate training and formalise partnerships with local cultural institutions to ground methodologies. epistemic sovereignty, knowledge decolonisation, African Studies, research capacity, Senegal, qualitative research This paper provides a novel analysis of the 'dual allegiance' framework as a key mechanism through which researchers negotiate the pressures of global academia and local epistemic communities, offering a new lens for understanding agency in postcolonial research landscapes.

Keywords: *Epistemic sovereignty, Decolonisation of knowledge, African Studies, Qualitative research, Senegal, Research methodologies, Knowledge production*

Article Highlights

- Over 80% of researchers report external funding priorities distorting local research agendas.
- Identifies structural and epistemological barriers to locally-led knowledge production in Senegal.
- Analyses the fraught but active pursuit of epistemic sovereignty within global knowledge economies.
- Proposes institutional reforms to strengthen endogenous research capacity and critical pedagogy.

Core Recommendation

National research councils should establish dedicated funding streams for community-prioritised research themes to counter the distorting influence of external agendas.

This analysis centres the lived experience of Senegalese researchers navigating asymmetrical global knowledge systems.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

This is an abstract-only publication. The complete research paper with full methodology, results, discussion, and references is available upon request.

REQUEST FULL PAPER

 **Email:** info@parj.africa

Request your copy of the full paper today!

SUBMIT YOUR RESEARCH

Are you a researcher in Africa? We welcome your submissions!

Join our community of African scholars and share your groundbreaking work.

 **Submit at:** app.parj.africa



Scan to visit app.parj.africa

Open Access Scholarship from PARJ

Empowering African Research | Advancing Global Knowledge