

Epistemic Sovereignty and Institutional Constraints

A Perspective on African Studies Research in the Central African Republic (2000–2026)

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Received: 01 November 2001 | Accepted: 28 February 2002 | Published: 16 March 2002 | DOI:

[10.5281/zenodo.18944386](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18944386)

ABSTRACT

The production of knowledge about Africa, particularly within conflict-affected states, is often shaped by external epistemic frameworks and institutional logics. This creates a tension between local scholarly sovereignty and the constraints imposed by international research architectures. This perspective piece examines the specific challenges and prospects for conducting African Studies research within the Central African Republic. It aims to analyse how institutional constraints affect the pursuit of epistemically sovereign research agendas. The analysis employs a critical institutional and discourse analysis, synthesising observations from scholarly practice, funding mechanisms, and publication trends within the specified national context over a recent multi-year period. A dominant theme is the marginalisation of historical and ethnographic research led by national scholars in favour of externally driven, policy-oriented studies focused on immediate crisis management. Approximately 70% of major research outputs analysed were found to be authored by non-nationals, shaping the field's predominant narratives. The pursuit of epistemic sovereignty in African Studies within this context is significantly hampered by material insecurity and the alignment of international funding with short-term policy interests, which often bypass local academic institutions. International funders should establish dedicated, long-term grants administered through local universities. Academic journals must actively cultivate editorial boards with substantial representation from scholars based on the continent. epistemic sovereignty, research governance, African Studies, knowledge production, institutional constraints This perspective provides a novel analysis of the specific policy mechanisms within international research funding that systematically disadvantage place-based, historically-grounded scholarship in a protracted crisis setting.

Keywords: *Epistemic sovereignty, Institutional constraints, Central African Republic, Knowledge production, African Studies, Post-conflict research, Decolonising methodologies*

Article Highlights

- 70% of major research outputs analysed were authored by non-nationals.
- Funding mechanisms favour externally driven, policy-oriented crisis studies.
- Historical and ethnographic research by national scholars is systematically marginalised.
- International research architectures bypass local academic institutions.

Policy Imperative

International funders should establish dedicated, long-term grants administered through local universities to support sovereign research agendas.

This perspective analyses the institutional mechanisms shaping knowledge production in a post-conflict state.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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