

Sources.
An interdisciplinary journal on materials and their uses in African Studies

Sources grew out of the observation that academic journals tend to encourage theoretical and epistemological advances at the expense of the field materials under analysis. This journal's mission is twofold: first, to resituate at the core of the articles the materials upon which researchers produce their reflections, while providing direct access to these materials; and second, to present analyses focusing on the contexts surrounding the production of these materials and their uses. This return to sources deriving from field work will take place in conjunction with topical thematics in African and Africana studies in the social sciences and humanities and will promote interdisciplinary dialogue. *Sources* thus aspires to restore full visibility to iteration for producing theoretical insights, that is, the movement back and forth between a research problem and the field, between interpretation and data.

Sources is thus adopting a particularly unusual mission, one not currently existing in the academic field on Africa: to make available texts, images, sounds, interviews, field notes, and documents in the broadest sense, which become data that form the basis for researchers' theoretical developments, and which thus constitute field research archives. This objective also arises from an acknowledgement of and a political stake in the primary importance of knowledge on Africa. The difficulties involved in accessing sources, especially textual, cartographic and demographic sources, are manifest and well-known, not to mention the challenges of preservation. The need to make these sources more visible, to provide long-term accessibility and availability for the continent also seems imperative for the objective of reducing asymmetries in the access to knowledge.

Materials treated may be of a very diverse nature. To cite a few examples, these might be private archives collected in the field or consulted in institutions – whether ancient or recent; writing produced locally (notebooks, journals, autobiographies, political tracts or pamphlets, museum guestbooks, etc.); excerpts from interviews, conversations, life stories; field notes written up, in particular, those coming out of participant observations; maps, outlines, sketches produced by the researcher in the field or by his interlocutors (such as participatory maps); photographs or videos; excerpts from “grey” literature (reports, evaluations) or the press; data pulled from social media, etc.

The increasingly broad range of sources reflects the wide variety of modes of empirical investigation that lie at the core of the social and human sciences, though these disciplines share similar interpretive procedures, theoretical problematics, heuristic perspectives, and similar paradigms and modalities in the construction of their object. They also reflect the multiplicity of objects of study and areas pursued today, not to mention the growing inventiveness in the empirical exploration by researchers who collect materials and produce data previously ignored, and use often pluridisciplinary approaches.

Materials will be reproduced in the journal, and accompanied by texts providing information on the context and their collection/production in the field, their producers, the local issues they might raise, their interest in the investigation being conducted and the reasons for

selecting them, as well as on their importance for research in general and their theoretical or epistemological advances. In addition to these methodological reflections, the articles will provide, within the framework of special issues, new analyses based on unpublished materials and their intersection through pluridisciplinary perspectives. Thus, we are not seeking to replicate what already exists in excellent journals.

Sources will encourage publication in different text formats. In articles focusing on field work, authors may develop in-depth reflective work on their relationship to the field, and to their use of the materials being collected. They may also write short articles reflecting on methodology or epistemology (the ethic to follow in difficult situations, for example in areas dealing with violence or situations involving private or intimate aspects) as well as publish longer field notes, an item from archives or an official document along with the necessary interpretation. Researchers will then be able to make reference to their article published in *Sources* in subsequent articles published in academic journals that give less space to detailed presentation of constituent research materials.

The journal will more generally support the following scientific missions:

- Promote the widest possible diffusion of knowledge in open access venues for the purpose of contributing to universalizing research.
- Favor interdisciplinarity based on an intersection of sources used in different disciplines and brought together through a common thread in themed issues.
- Encourage, by highlighting scientific networks in Africa, publications by African academics and those working in Africa.
- Archive original sources, archives, and materials coming out of a variety of mediums. Long-term thinking is guiding the assemblage of these resources, so that corpuses created and put in open access today will be accessible for consultation by researchers in general, but also become research materials in the coming decades. This implies storing articles on a durable platform that will guarantee long-term access.

Sources will publish two issues per year. It welcomes open issues, as well as special issues, for which calls for papers will be issued. The journal will value the publication of varying textual formats. Mainly trilingual (English-French-Portuguese), it will also accept other publication languages (Arabic, Wolof, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, etc.), on a case-by-case basis, when accompanied by a translation. Each issue will include a section designed to get the word out about projects focusing on the collection, preservation, and archiving of materials, either historical or recent; and specialized works dealing with sources in Africa and in its diasporas. *Sources* will be published primarily online to allow for a greater range of source formats (video, sound, social media) and to avoid problems of volume. It may also appear in hard copy if the research institutes based in Africa judge it useful for reaching African publics. *Sources* made available through the paper edition will be less complete than through the online version, but digital references for materials will always be provided. *Sources* is a peer-reviewed journal with a reading committee. Articles submitted will benefit from a process of evaluation by peers: two experts, at least one of whom will be independent of the reading committee, will be solicited for their opinion, before the final decision is made to publish.

The materials will be stored and described in digital platforms dedicated to the archiving

of scientific data, adapted thematically, and applying the principles of FAIR data to the greatest extent possible (<https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles>). Disclosure of these data will be limited only by legal and ethical considerations, especially to protect private life, to protect personal data, and to protect intellectual property. To respect these principles, sources made publicly available will be partially anonymized. The responsibility for the use and representation of primary sources, especially those of a sensitive political nature or jeopardizing the protection of individuals, will be discussed in consultation with the author.

With regard to scientific ethics, the editorial team at *Sources* is committed to adhering to the principles of transparency and best practices for scholarly publishing suggested by the *Committee on Publication Ethics*: <https://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines-new/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing>

(Traduit par Lynn Palermo)