An Appreciation of the Life of Patrick Chabal From the AEGIS Board and Advisory Council

The Board and Advisory Council of AEGIS mourn the passing of Patrick Chabal and extend their profound sympathy to family, especially Farzana and Emile, and friends alike. The fact that AEGIS is such a vibrant community today owes a great deal to the inspired vision of Patrick. Under his leadership, AEGIS was transformed from a club, representing a handful of Centres, to a veritable alliance of Centres across Europe. Although the success of AEGIS still lay in the interpersonal dynamic between a circle of friends, the structures of the network had to adjust to take account of exponential growth. Under Patrick's watch, and driven in association with his close friends Alessandro Triulzi and Gerti Hesseling, the AEGIS summer schools, the biannual thematic conferences and the publications series with Brill became the lifeblood of the network. A greater achievement still was the launching of the European Conferences on African Studies (ECAS) in 2005 after years of being under discussion. When Patrick retired from the Board in 2008, he left AEGIS in excellent shape. And despite his own poor health over the past couple of years, Patrick continued to be active in the network through his contribution to the Advisory Council.

As a scholar, Patrick's made an impact on the field that most can only dream of. His biography of Amilcar Cabral (1983) and the liberation war in Guinea-Bissau remains unsurpassed. Influential contributions to the study of African Politics followed, with the edited collection, Political Domination in Africa (1986) and a later monograph entitled Power in Africa: An Essay in Political Interpretation (1993). His collaboration with Jean-Pascal Daloz, Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument (1999), defined a field and became one of the most influential books on Africa of the last quarter century. His last foray into the study of African politics was Africa: The Politics of Suffering and Smiling (2009). In his final years, Patrick tackled some of the larger questions of the intersection of culture and power, with (co-author Daloz) Culture Troubles: Politics and the Interpretation of Meaning (2006) and most recently The End of Conceit: Western Rationality After Postcolonialism (2012). Crucially, these were not intended for exclusively Africanist audiences. Patrick was often impatient with what he saw as the cult of narrow empiricism and felt it was his responsibility as a scholar to make larger statements, even if these were not always to his readers' liking. This willingness to expose himself to the scrutiny and critique of his peers was wonderfully exemplified by the debate over The Politics of Suffering and Smiling which was held at ECAS 3 in Leipzig in 2009 and subsequently published in the pages of Critical African Studies.

Patrick was instrumental in creating the Gerti Hesseling Prize in honour of another great servant to AEGIS and African Studies more generally. It brings with great sadness to note that Patrick succumbed to the very same illness as his very good friend, Gerti. Together, they will be remembered as visionaries who launched African Studies in Europe as a serious intellectual project. At the same
time, Patrick's contribution reminds us of the manifold pleasures that go with enacting this kind of trans-national cooperation. We remain forever in his debt.

Paul Nugent (Chair)
Leo de Haan
Ton Dietz
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Carin Norberg
Manuel Ramos
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