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## The puzzle of Madagascar's economic collapse through the lens of social sciences.

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# DIALOGUE

La lettre d'information de DIAL

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## Focus :

### The puzzle of Madagascar's economic collapse through the lens of social sciences.

Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world today with per capita GDP of less than 450 US dollars in 2017 and a colossal rate of monetary poverty.<sup>1</sup> Yet nothing appears to have ever marked the country out for such a terrible fate. Far from it, in fact. Not only has per capita GDP been trending downward since 1960, but every time the country has set out on a growth path, it has been stopped in its tracks by a socio-political crisis that has shattered the hopes it raised. Madagascar's long-term economic trajectory is indeed a real mystery, which beyond the case in hand, raises farther-reaching questions as to what is behind the divergent development processes observed in the world today.

Working on research targeted at and on Madagascar since the mid-1990s, we launched a research programme in the early 2010s to find some answers to this mystery that appears to defy imitation elsewhere in the world. Taking an angle close to the approach initiated by the Annales School in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the aim of this programme was to produce an integrated analysis of the Malagasy trajectory, drawing on and comparing contributions from history, sociology, economics and political science. The programme has covered a number of different dimensions, capitalising on the quarter of a century of work we have conducted on Madagascar, bringing on board over 25 researchers from different disciplines (economics, sociology, history, political science, law and anthropology) (Razafindrakoto *et al.*, [2014a](#), [2017a](#) & [2018a](#)).<sup>2</sup> The programme set out first to document and define the long-term economic trajectory in as much detail as possible. It then compared disciplinary perspectives, methods and levels of analysis to produce an intelligible model of this trajectory, seeking out its structural features and identifying its mechanisms. Recognising the singularity and complexity of the historical events concerned, the programme has spearheaded specific studies on Madagascar's key development players (elites, diaspora and general public).

<sup>1</sup> World Bank data estimate the rate of extreme poverty at 76% in 2017, measured on the basis of 1.9 US dollars (in purchasing power parity).

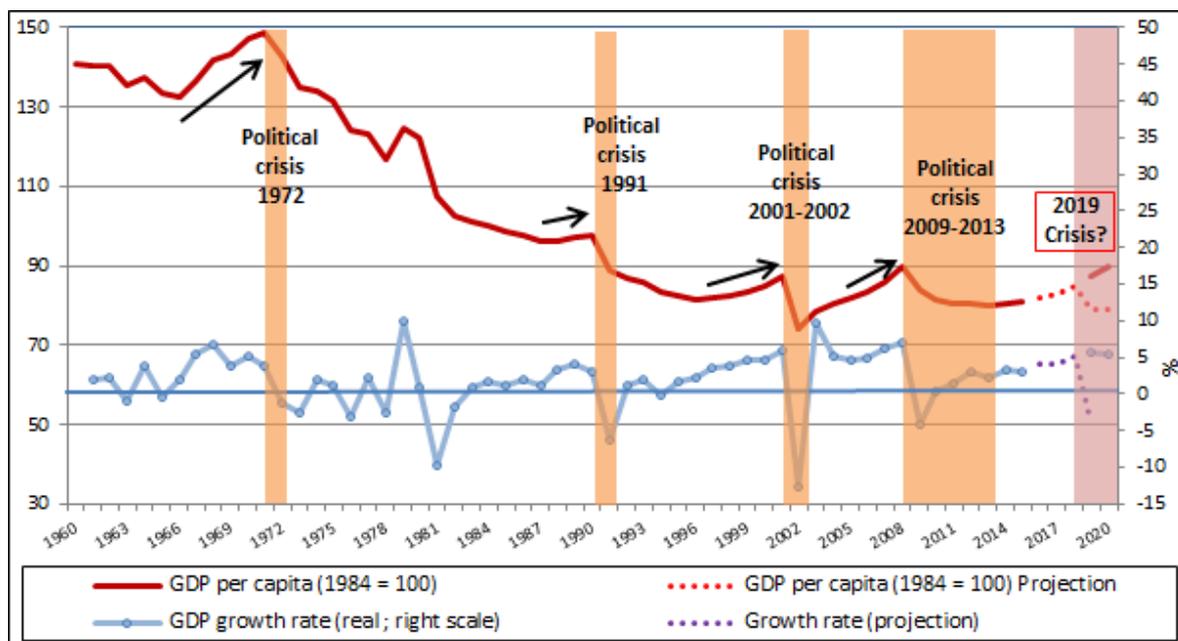
<sup>2</sup> Note that the previous issue of Dialogue on Madagascar published in 2010 already highlighted the collective nature of DIAL's work on this country (Wachsberger, 2010).



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Our specific approach links up our partnership-based research with four pillars (see diagram): 1) production of statistical data with the development and implementation of original survey methodologies where data are patchy; 2) an analytical component drawing on in-depth knowledge of the context and the field to address macro concerns (at national level) and inform public policies; 3) a substantial training component for use as much on academic courses (masters and doctorates) as in continuing training programmes for managers and experts in Southern (and Northern) countries; and 4) an information, dissemination and communication pillar, not just for academia, but also for a wider audience of policymakers, press, civil society and public opinion in general, first and foremost in Madagascar, mainly to inform the democratic debate. In this respect, the programme has also given rise to different types of training (supervision of Master's theses and dissertations, and the "Tany Vao Madagascar" southern social sciences winter school in 2016 and 2018) and many widely attended conferences.

### The Malagasy mystery: growth and socio-political crises 1960-2016



Source: INSTAT (2018), World Development Indicators (2017); authors' calculations. In [Razafindrakoto et al., 2017a](#). Note: Per capita GDP in 1984 constant MGF.

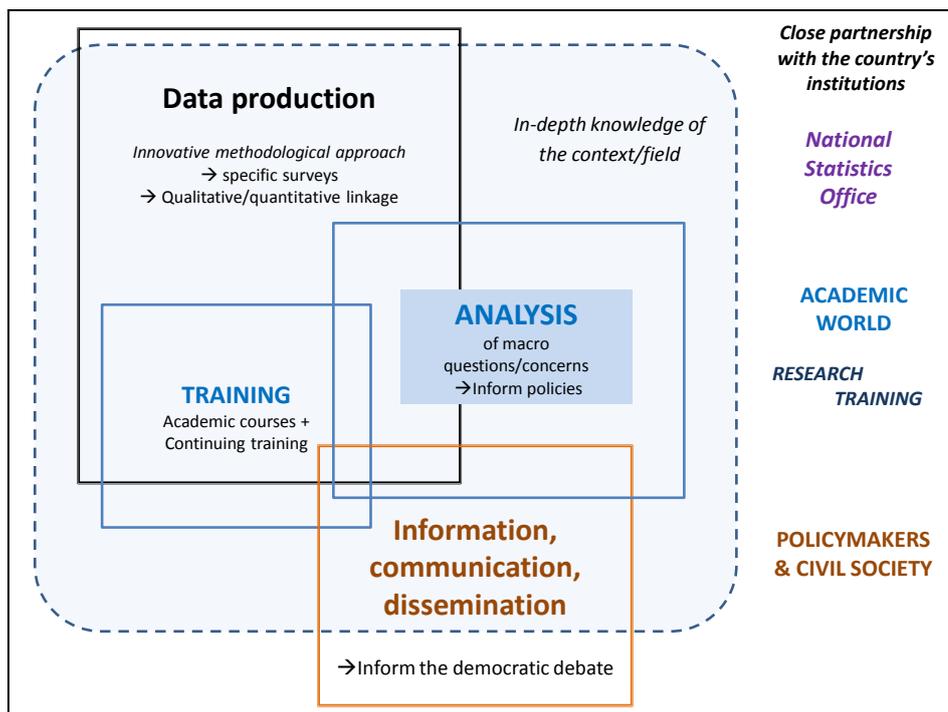
#### 1. Documenting and defining the long-term economic trajectory

Although there is a certain historical tradition of writing in (and on) Madagascar, it is more political and religious and merely skims economic issues. As with most poor countries, available written sources on Madagascar's economy are terribly patchy. Moreover, few of the quantitative macroeconomic data (virtually non-existent before 1960 and incomplete thereafter) are entirely reliable, including the most recent data. These are serious limitations, but they can be pushed back.

For example, we have used a range of information sources to allow for data triangulation to underpin the diagnosis of Madagascar's economic decline (*the puzzle*) and the conjunction of political crises with economic upturns (*the paradox*). The diagnosis was initially made based on GDP data calculated by the Madagascar National Statistics Office (INSTAT) and compiled by leading international databases such as the World Bank's World Development Indicators, the Penn Tables and the series put together by Maddison and his team at the University of Groningen. These are the world's three leading reference sources. In the case of Africa, these data have been severely criticised for their lack of reliability and transparency (Jerven, 2010, 2011 & 2015), and Madagascar is obviously no exception

to this criticism. Household consumption surveys, however, present two advantages that made them a second option to validate the diagnosis. First, the information sources can be compared and triangulated for a robust diagnosis because the surveys are totally separate from the system of national accounts (which has never made use of them). Second, the surveys by their nature reflect the population's standard of living better than per capita GDP, which includes a certain number of components (private and public investment, etc.) from which households do not benefit. The first observation to emerge from these analyses was that the Malagasy standard of living has effectively dropped since independence. Secondly, the upturns do indeed appear to have been real and not simply statistical artefacts. Thirdly, aside from differences observed in the intensity of the phenomenon, both data sources (national accounts and surveys) converge to confirm the very real existence of the Malagasy puzzle and paradox ([Razafindrakoto et al., 2017a](#)).

### *Methodological approach*



Source: Razafindrakoto (2017)

In addition to the use of population surveys, this programme also called for the use of historical methods to more firmly establish the long-term economic facts, a perspective still quite rare in Madagascar. This approach was adopted by Samuel Sanchez, Post-Doc at Dial in 2016-2017 and Associate Professor in African History at the University of Paris. He used an analysis of a range of documentary resources from Malagasy and French archives (market price documentation, customs archives, Malagasy government tax resource registers, etc.) to capture such elements as the long-run weight of colonisation-driven “illiberal” extraversion on taxation, with its low tax burden rates and narrow tax base (Sanchez, 2018).

Lastly, although the imperfect nature of the existing macroeconomic data casts doubt on the explanatory capacity of the econometric models that make use of them, these data can nonetheless be used carefully and cautiously to identify the main features of the long-run economic order. Such is the option chosen by Alain D’Hoore, Lead Economist at the World Bank based in Madagascar from 2011 to 2013, who contributed to the co-authored book ([Razafindrakoto et al., 2018a](#)). Based on a methodical collection of economic facts drawn from the World Development Indicators (WDI), whose relevance he discussed, he found two major characteristics: the introduction and prolonged endurance

of distortions on market agriculture and a persistent shortfall in public investment (D’Hoore, 2018). This was also the purpose of David Naudet, Director of the French Agency for Development (AFD) in Madagascar from 2012 to 2016, and Linda Rua, doctoral candidate in economics with Dial, based on an analysis of the profile of public spending and its dynamics in Madagascar drawing on data less subject to caution. Their contribution to the co-authored book reveals that Madagascar has one of the weakest public sectors in the world due to structurally weak tax receipts and official development assistance significantly below the aid the country could theoretically receive given its characteristics (making Madagascar one of the world’s most under-aided countries (Naudet & Rua, 2018).

## **2. Producing an intelligible model of Madagascar’s long-term economic trajectory**

A more palpable gauge of Madagascar’s downfall can be gleaned from a comparison with other African countries. Despite sharper variations in Cameroon and Côte d’Ivoire, both countries have managed to set in motion the sustainable growth processes of which Madagascar has proved incapable. Nor does Madagascar bear comparison with Benin and Burkina Faso, both infinitely less well-endowed on all counts. In current dollars, Madagascar’s per capita GDP in 1960 was twice that of Burkina Faso. Fifty years on, it was 33% lower. Benin’s lag of 30% at independence had turned into a lead of nearly double Madagascar by the end of the period. These two countries, both very poor performers on a global scale, have grown around three times faster on average than Madagascar. So the Malagasy trajectory is highly specific and we need to find out why.

### ***The usual theories do not work***

We looked for explanations first in the economists’ toolbox, i.e. growth and development theory and its offshoots. We sounded out a broad spectrum of possible determinants (*the usual suspects*) to decide whether any of them displayed dynamics tentatively specific and deficient enough to be potential suspects to explain Madagascar’s misfortune (Razafindrakoto *et al.*, [2015](#) & [2017a](#)). Yet these factors generally put forward by the development theories appeared powerless to explain Madagascar’s poor long-run performance.

This poor performance is even more intriguing considering the country’s favourable “circumstances”: a country with natural borders, a wealth of arable land and mining and timber resources, cultural and linguistic unity, and low anthropogenic pressure, all structural advantages (agro-climatic, human and political) that are undoubtedly the envy of many a poor country (especially in the Sudano-Sahelian region).

Nor do Madagascar’s economic policy choices explain the country’s trajectory. Madagascar has explored in turn most of the options (import substitution, structural adjustment – growth driven by exports and foreign investment – and poverty reduction), and has by and large taken the line of admittedly contradictory policies, but donor-recommended policies all the same without making any major departure from other developing countries (African in particular).

The explanation for Madagascar’s economic failure is not to be found in the structural weakness of its institutions either. Firstly, its institutional system was relatively sounder at independence than in other comparable developing countries. Secondly, Madagascar has demonstrated its institutional capacity for regulation on a number of occasions (in the economic sphere with the exceptional continental success of the export processing zones from 1995 to 2001; in the bureaucratic sphere with its performance in combatting bureaucratic corruption from 1995 to 2005; and in the public sphere with two democratic changes of power in two successive free elections in 1993 and 1996).

Nor is ethnic diversity, put forward by many studies taking up Easterly and Levine (1997) to explain Africa’s underperformance, a key to the Malagasy system either. Madagascar’s politics and economy

exhibit one of the least pronounced ethnic dimensions of the continent.

### ***An integrated political economy approach***

The inability to explain the particularity of Madagascar's trajectory using a purely economic approach ultimately points to the need for an integrated political economy study. On this score, a promising conceptual framework has been proposed by North and his co-authors (2009 & 2012) on the nature of *natural states* and *open access orders*. The conjunction of economic growth periods and political crises does indeed suggest that one of the main reasons for the country's problems might well be its poor ability to establish a stable political consensus surrounding the wealth accumulation and distribution processes. Under this hypothesis, any attempt to understand the Malagasy *puzzle* and *paradox* calls for both an analysis of the economic mechanisms at work and consideration of the elements of the socio-political environment in which these mechanisms operate. Power games, elites and the institutions they fashion to their advantage are obviously central to the equation.

This hypothesis calls for a review of the country's long history using a political economy analytic framework: who are the players in each period and how do they interact, what are the main sources of power and wealth, which institutions drive social regulation, and what are the system's contradictions? Although many books have been published on Malagasy history and society, very few have taken this angle. The country's cultural history, economic history – as singularly deficient as it is – and political history are generally approached separately. And rare are the studies that take a very long-term view. The programme hence first undertook this review of history through the lens of the political economy concepts ([Razafindrakoto et al., 2014b](#)).

We combined this historical review with use of the abovementioned household surveys (existing and ad-hoc surveys conducted for this research: *I-2-3 Survey* and governance and democracy modules) to propose a general interpretive framework for the workings of Malagasy society, some of the elements of which are outlined here.

This critical, targeted analysis set out to identify the main developments in the island's system of economic and social regulation throughout its long history. Significant changes have taken place and we have seen the gradual expansion of the elite political and economic circle. The emergence of a meritocratic elite was spawned by the institutionalisation of the state reaching as far back as the precolonial period, the abolition of slavery, the end to the status group system, and the development of education. Similarly, political nepotism and the use of "state rent" have driven the appearance of new political and economic players. At the same time, democratic aspirations have surfaced and found a voice to speak out against the different regimes' abuses and precipitate their fall. So the corridors of power do not appear to be impenetrable.

Yet the fact remains that behind the range of rhetoric and ideologies asserted over time, the system and practices at the highest levels of the state have barely changed. Neither the post-independence Malagatisation phase, the socialist years, the structural adjustment and liberalisation period, nor the coming to power of a self-made man from the rural world – let alone the 2009-2013 so-called transition period or the subsequent period marked by the state's decline – has been able to uphold the principle of equity and reduce the inequalities between the hereditary elites and the lower classes, any more than between regions (especially between highlands and coastal regions) or between urban and rural areas. Irrespective of whether social position is by birthright or by merit in the rare cases of social advancement, the individuals concerned have generally used it to implement short-term strategies to manage and build their own economic and political power. No regime can claim to have enabled the country to really take off. In addition, in a mark of the elites' poor ability to form stable coalitions, "all the heads of state since 1960 have been directly or indirectly brought to and/or divested of power by a political crisis," (Rabemananoro, 2014). The successive leaders since the First Republic have nearly always ascended to head of state as the providential man, as the only possible alternative to end the

previous regime. Each regime, fragile by nature, has systematically sought to increase its power by concentrating it, personalising it and securing the support of a small group of influential players (new *côtier* elites, party officials, church representatives, etc.). Unable to think outside of the short-term box, none has sought the support of the masses by trying to meet popular aspirations. Instead, neglect and exclusion of this vast, essentially rural, majority has been a constant throughout Madagascar's history. Yet it is precisely the accumulated discontents that have driven protest and regime overthrow every time, sometimes playing straight into the hands of political manipulation.

Economic rents in Madagascar have never been large, being small by nature or for lack of a growth strategy. However, for a country where poverty is preponderant and rents are shared among a very small number of players, whether hereditary elites or insiders, these revenues constitute both a goldmine and a source of major inequalities. Rents include those from the ownership of land and other real estate. The trading economy (coffee, vanilla, cloves and tea) that developed in the days of colonisation flourished for a time before stagnating and even declining in the 1980s and 1990s due to the absence of suitable support policies and to international competition. However, the nationalisation of foreign businesses (in the 1970s) and subsequent privatisations (in the 1980s and 1990s) fostered the emergence of a small number of local entrepreneurs along with entrepreneurs from the *Karana* and *Zanatany* minorities. During this period, the better-informed individuals closest to the seat of power also sought to take advantage of the opportunities offered by free trade, possibilities of exemptions, subsidies and large-scale public investments more or less legally appropriated. Despite the small size of the domestic market, the distribution of consumer goods is also a lucrative sector, in which the *Karana* are very present. The development of the export processing zone that began in the late 1990s has attracted more particularly foreign investors. There are very few nationals in this sector, since it is difficult to enter the highly competitive international market restricted to those with overseas networks. Yet the most easily accessible rents are those from foreign aid, which can be captured by means of public procurement contracts (civil engineering, institutional assistance, etc.). The appearance of new mining rents along with illegal trade in precious woods could constitute a turning point in the 2000s in view of the sums involved, immeasurably higher than the above-mentioned rents, and their potential source of destabilisation and major conflict. In short, rents in Madagascar have materialised mainly out of opportunities and benefits secured on a one-off basis (or over short periods) from inherited or acquired privileged positions in or connected with the corridors of power. These rents are hence beyond the reach of people outside the circle of power. Access and control are managed by individual or family strategies, not by group strategies.

### ***The structural factors involved in Madagascar's trajectory***

Malagasy society is historically highly hierarchical, endlessly differentiating and ranking individuals in keeping with a hereditary inegalitarian order that has lost none of its symbolism over time, despite the country's politico-social changes. Seen from this angle, it could be said that social relations are based on symbolic violence that upholds the long-term domination of a small group of individuals over the masses. They are also driven by fear of slipping down the ladder at all levels of the social hierarchy. This result, among other things, in a majority of the middle and upper classes fearing social disorder among all others. Added to this is the atomisation of the population, which plays a decisive role in the way Malagasy society works. Other Malagasy particularities that imply the people have a poor rallying capacity are the low population density, the distance between villages, a low level of rural exodus and, more generally, structurally low domestic migration.

Social inertia is further reinforced by weak formal and informal intermediary bodies, a missing vertical link between president and the population. Neither local authorities, nor political parties or civil society organisations have any real capacity for action. Incapable of claiming to be representative of the people, they have little influence. At the same time, their lack of influence means that the people do not feel the need to approach them. This weakness is especially problematic in that it is not offset

by the presence of mediation bodies organised around traditional leaders, as found elsewhere on the continent. Personalisation of power and “excessive presidentialisation” therefore stand the president alone before the people.

This phenomenon is accentuated by the subsistence of a traditional political theology that instils the *Fanjakana* (the state) with a providential quality and attaches *Raiamandreny* status (duly respected father and mother of their subjects) to those who embody it. The historical role of religious figures and the churches reinforces this political theology, elevating the president, the ultimate incarnation of secular power, to a symbolic and virtually divine station. There hence appears to be little uptake among the Malagasy people (compared with other African countries) of the idea that government should be accountable for its actions. Yet at the same time, the Malagasy people prove to be the most convinced of the civic role they should play in overseeing that the president and parliamentary representatives carry out their duties to the best of their abilities. This contradiction points up the difficulties the Malagasy people have finding their place in the ongoing process: midway between tradition and modernity, the people are torn between the past (respect for the *Fanjakana*) and their democratic aspirations (demand for the people’s power of oversight).

Lastly, the taboo on political violence fosters the status quo. There seems to have been remarkably little political violence indeed in the history of Madagascar since independence. Conflicts have tended to be low in intensity and have never degenerated into mass carnage. It is as if violence were not or cannot be a legitimate strategic resource in Malagasy politics. Paradoxically, however, this low level of violence is also a source of instability. It is often the very use of violence by the ruling power that precipitates its overthrow ([Razafindrakoto et al., 2018b](#)).

The upshot of these elements is a yawning divide between the elites and the people. In the cities, a privileged few enjoy conditions similar to developed country nationals (the “globalised elites”), while the vast majority of the population lives on the breadline locked in poverty traps. Although economic rents in Madagascar (export crops, trade, nationalisation in the 1970s, privatisations in the 1980s and 1990s, and foreign aid and finance throughout the period) have never been as large scale as in other African countries, they are shared among a very small number of players, whether hereditary elites or insiders, and form a source of major inequalities.

Social fragmentation is also a factor in the chronic political instability. Madagascar features a lack of stable, long-term coalitions of elites. The principles of differentiation and rank bear great resonance within the elites themselves, explaining why there are more families, sometimes expanded into clans, than organisations. The elites hence appear to be highly individualistic, and thereby atomised themselves. It is only when a small group around the presidential clan obtains excessive power that temporary alliances form. Yet these cannot last as they are arrived at by negotiations binding on individuals only, are not inclusive and do not commit any organisation’s credibility. This shortcoming provides a partial explanation for the country’s instability. Since access to political power is the most important source of rents, it is particularly coveted. In these circumstances, it is relatively easy for an individual personality with particular characteristics (traditional roots, charisma, wealth, etc.) to conquer it. Given that no group, no organisation (formal or informal), has the monopoly over violence or can claim to have a sufficient power of violence to put together coercive forces, it is easy to destabilise the ruling regime with demonstrations and “a few sacrificed lives”.

The scant attention paid the populations and the fragility of the clientelistic connections do not afford broad-based popular support for the men in power. Malagasy farmers and many of the informal sector workers have not really been “captured” by either the political system or the economic system. Popular discontent always forms the backdrop in all time periods. This can be seen from the major protest movements of 1972, 1991, 2002 and, marginally, 2009, which were at the heart of the political changeovers. So even in a country with colossal power imbalances, where ordinary citizens have very little empowerment (education, information, representation, voice, etc.) in the way their counterparts in developed countries do, the people matter. Every time, these outbursts of discontent are triggered by

the growing gap between new aspirations fired by economic growth and/or political opening and actual outcomes.

External factors form one last explanatory element for the long-term political instability. The consequences of the donors' ongoing operational actions, which effectively weakened the state from the early 1980s to the 2000s, were disastrous. This pressure, combined with the people's poor capacity to demand accountability, brought on the gradual institutional decay and loss of legitimacy (especially among public institutions) found by the surveys: Madagascar is the country with the least institutional legitimacy (justice, police and tax administration) of all the countries where the same survey questions have been administered. This situation is all the more problematic in that, unlike other African countries where the vertical patronage relations are organised around structural factors such as ethnicity, it is the *Fanjakana* in Madagascar that has historically played the role of cement holding together the different levels of the social hierarchy. As it crumbled, no alternative organic principle stepped in with the capacity to hold back the rising societal entropy pressures (anarchy and anomie).

### **3. Using and conducting original surveys on key players in Madagascar's development**

In general, the programme has sought to optimise the use of existing empirical resources on social players, more specifically the people and the elites. There are two advantages to this original use of statistical surveys spearheaded largely by the authors. Unlike aggregate data, these surveys are representative and reliable. Their data can be disaggregated for more in-depth analyses to get right down to the "flesh and blood" players, who are ultimately the real agents acting unseen behind the concepts of institutions, organisations and so on. They also bring the people back to the stage as fully fledged players.

Some of these surveys, designed before the programme, can and have been used for secondary analyses. Of note here are the *1-2-3 Surveys* and the different modules grafted on to them over time (*governance and democracy* modules, *crisis* modules, *health, inequality and social divides* module, etc.). The same can be said of the Afrobarometer surveys. Others were developed specifically for this programme, as is the case with the 2015 *Power and Citizen* survey on how Malagasy citizens perceive and relate to power, the ELIMAD survey on the Malagasy elites, and the CITMAD "mirror" survey conducted to compare the perceptions and values of the elites with the rest of the population.

One last, two-track survey is currently still being developed regarding members of the Malagasy diaspora and diaspora associations. The characteristics of these players based outside the country raise questions as to their actual or potential influence on the country's trajectory. An analysis of existing sources on migrants from Madagascar reveals that this is the number one Sub-Saharan African diaspora in France. It stands out for its proportion of women, a high level of education and its extraordinary social and geographical integration. It is, for example, more well-spread across the country while its rate of French naturalisation is much higher compared with other migrants. These characteristics no doubt explain its low visibility ([Razafindrakoto, 2017b](#)).

We present here solely the survey on the elites (ELIMAD). Elites are central to many political economy approaches and, more broadly, to all studies of institutions and organisations. Yet the frequency of research bringing into play the concept of elites is inversely proportional to the empirical material available for studies on the subject.

The ELIMAD survey is designed to resolve this shortfall in Madagascar by capturing the country's elites in all their diversity and as a whole. To do so, it takes a functional definition of elites as all those who hold or have held the highest positions in their field or sector and who, in this capacity, have, have had or potentially have a power of decision or influence, in their specific domain, but also, due to

the interdependence of domains (material and/or symbolic), over the whole of society. The idea of the survey is therefore to take the positions held by individuals to define the elite universe.

In line with the political economy approach presented above, we have therefore chosen to pinpoint the elites based on their position in the institutions that make the social “rules of the game”. These institutions concern, in Madagascar as elsewhere, nine spheres of power: government, elected office (formal and informal, such as the traditional chiefdoms), political parties, public institutions, uniformed forces, large corporations, civil society organisations, religious institutions and international organisations. The scope of the ELIMAD survey therefore covers all those people who hold or have held (at least) the highest positions. From this, we drew a sample.

The sampling strategy used a snowball sampling technique, designed to limit bias. These non-probability sampling techniques have often been used to conduct studies on populations not included in censuses and hard to reach, such as drug addicts (Johnston & Sabin, 2010). In addition, we undertook to build an elite sampling frame during the survey, which enabled us to rectify our sample midway. A wide range of sources were used to build this sampling frame such as the *Official Journal*, different official directories and registers, websites, the press and direct interviews. This sampling frame is obviously imperfect, but it forms a reasonable preliminary approximation of the elite universe.

However, how to obtain a representative sample is not the only problem that needs to be solved when setting out to conduct a survey of elites. The scope of the ELIMAD survey includes the hyper-elite (estimated at less than 0.1% of the population), yet it is much harder to interview individuals in high-ranking social positions than individuals at the bottom of the social hierarchy. For all sorts of reasons (lack of time, distrust and domination effects), those at the top of the ladder are either not inclined to play the game or do enter into the game, but tend to attempt to change its rules. Those at the bottom of the ladder are often more available (for entirely the opposite reasons). These problems present particular challenges to a quantitative survey of Malagasy elites. The large quantity of information we set out to collect and its “sensitive” nature made the questionnaire particularly intrusive and asked interviewees to spend an extremely long time with interviewers (often nearly two hours). The probability of a member of the elites accepting to answer these questions, even partially, may therefore seem very low at first glance. However, the survey strategy that we adopted and improved as we received feedback minimised the number of refusals and incomplete surveys and reached the target sample of 1,000 people in just under two years.

This strategy consisted first of all of recruiting some 50 interviewers from among the authors’ connections, by word of mouth, and also from classified advertisements placed in the newspapers. These interviewers were selected for their high-ranking social positions in Malagasy society and their social network. Close to or themselves members of the elites, those who we called “super-interviewers” hence had a select calling card that opened the door to the individuals to be interviewed. The strategy was also to give interviewers a great deal of leeway to establish a relationship of trust to encourage interviewees to speak freely and to address the different parts of the survey in the way they saw fit. The interviewer training sessions, during which the questionnaire was presented, also helped prepare them for the interviews by teaching them some of the “ropes” learnt from previous elite survey experiences (Cohen, 1999; Dexter, 2006; Genieys, 2011) and placing them in mock interview situations. Lastly, we volunteered our credibility as a guarantee of the survey’s value and data confidentiality. This credibility has been built on a long-standing partnership with Malagasy institutions, recognised relevance of the analyses of the main societal issues, and the systematic dissemination of findings to a wide audience.

Ultimately, there were very few refusals and the questionnaires were virtually all completed in their entirety. This survey hence forms an unprecedented source of information (at the level of Madagascar, but also at a farther-reaching level) on the elite universe, covering their sociodemographic characteristics, their elite pathways, their networks and their values. It has already been used to outline

a sociography of the elites ([Razafindrakoto et al., 2017a](#)) and to underpin part of the previous political economy analyses. However, this initial use far from exhausts the possibilities extended by the quality and wealth of the data. Linda Rua, doctoral candidate at Dial under our supervision, has chosen to base her economics of networks thesis (defence in 2019) on data from the ELIMAD survey. And we continue to make use of them ourselves. All the survey-based analyses will form the cornerstone of the last opus of *The Red Island Quartet*, an ambitious four-part editorial project on Madagascar's trajectory and the recurring socio-political crises that pepper its path, three volumes of which have already been published (Razafindrakoto et al., [2014a](#), [2017a](#) & [2018a](#)).

### **Mireille Razafindrakoto, François Roubaud, Jean-Michel Wachsberger**

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