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Respacing Africa

Edited by

Ulf Engel and Paul Nugent



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CONTENTS

Introduction: The spatial turn in African studies	1
<i>Ulf Engel and Paul Nugent</i>	
Actors, places, regions, and global forces: An essay on the spatial history of Africa since 1700	11
<i>Allen M. Howard</i>	
State, region and space in Africa	45
<i>Fredrik Söderbaum and Ian Taylor</i>	
Siamese twin towns and unitary concepts in border inequality	71
<i>David B. Coplan</i>	
Respacing for peace, security and sustainable development: The African Union Border Programme in European comparative historical perspective	89
<i>Anthony I. Asiwaju</i>	
Staying put in moving sands. The stepwise migration process of sub-Saharan African migrants heading north	113
<i>Joris Schapendonk</i>	
Reshaping Congolese statehood in the midst of crisis and transition	139
<i>Timothy Raeymaekers and Koen Vlassenroot</i>	
The neo-tribal competitive order in the borderland of Egypt and Libya	169
<i>Thomas Hüsken</i>	
List of contributors	207
Index	211

INTRODUCTION: THE SPATIAL TURN IN AFRICAN STUDIES

Ulf Engel and Paul Nugent

Like its predecessors, this edited volume originated in the context of the European Conferences on African Studies which are organised since 2005 every two years by the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (AEGIS; www.aegis-eu.org). The first volume, which coincided with ECAS 1 held in London, dealt with violent conflict in Africa; the second volume, published for ECAS 2 in Leiden, Netherlands in 2007, highlighted the issue of African agency. The present volume brings together perspectives on space as an analytical category.

ECAS 3 was held between 4 and 7 June 2009 in Leipzig under the rubric of 'Respacing Africa'. This was meant as an invitation to take stock of the impact of the spatial turn on African studies. With Einstein's general theory on relativity, the foundations for a new way of thinking on space had been introduced in 1905. This opened the way to go beyond the mechanistic Newtonian notion of space as a given which was absolute, isotropic and independent of the observers' position. The German philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) was one of the first thinkers who elaborated on space as an analytical category. Yet it took another 50 to 60 years or so for this meta-theoretical position to take ground. A research programme for the spatial turn was spelt out in 1974 by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) when he published his 'The Production of Space'. But it was only in 1999 when the post-modern, US-born geographer Edward W. Soja (2005 [1999]: 261) could state that:

Contemporary critical studies in the humanities and social sciences have been experiencing an unprecedented spatial turn. In what may in retrospect be seen as one of the most important intellectual developments in the late twentieth century, scholars have begun to interpret space and the spatiality of human life with the same critical insight and interpretative power as have traditionally been given to time and history (the historicity of human life) on the one hand, and to social relations and society (the sociality of human life) on the other.

The innovation the spatial turn brought to the humanities and social sciences probably becomes most obvious when looking at political

science, a discipline which was institutionalised at the very beginning of the 20th the century, i.e. at a time when the nation-state was successfully established as the dominant regime of territoriality (cf. Maier 2000). Political science in particular has contributed to an essentialisation of geographical space. As a discipline—think of ‘comparative politics’ and ‘international relations’, both based on states as units of analysis—it had advocated an epistemology of state-centrism; for decades political scientists have worked with a containerised notion of the state and grounded their work in ‘methodological nationalism’ or ‘methodological territorialism’. And even with the development of post-modern approaches this general position was not questioned. According to US geographer John Agnew (1994) for many years political science, or more precisely the sub-discipline International Relations, therefore has been facing a ‘territorial trap’. Along the same lines, US sociologist Neil Brenner (1999: 40) has criticized the ‘spatial fetishism’ of the social sciences which led to a transformation of space from an epistemology into an ontology:

The recognition that social relations are becoming increasingly interconnected on a global scale necessarily problematizes the spatial parameters of those relations, and therefore, the geographical context in which they occur. Under these circumstances, space no longer appears as a static platform of social relations, but rather as one of their constitutive dimensions, itself historically produced, reconfigured, and transformed.

A strong plea for a reconceptualisation of space has come from what has been labelled ‘new political geography’. Influenced by post-modern, constructivist reasoning geographers such as the Finn Anssi Paasi (2003: 110) argued that space is socially constructed:

Territories are not frozen frameworks where social life occurs. Rather, they are made, given meanings, and destroyed in social and individual action. Hence, they are typically contested and actively negotiated... Spatial organizations, meanings of space, and the territorial use of space are historically contingent and their histories are closely interrelated.

Hence, space is not longer treated as a given, but as the product of social practices and conventions which in themselves are the result of symbolic and discursive acts. Space is socially constructed, and representations of space structure social action (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]). Today, the spatial turn has reached most disciplines, and it has fundamentally changed some of them, such as human geography. In African studies, too, the spatial turn has made considerable inroads—as demonstrated by the

response to the call for panels for ECAS 3. However, in our case the reasons for the spatial turn are somewhat different—and, in respects, the obverse. Hence whereas European research has been concerned with state-led efforts at territorialisation, in Africa it is often the ‘failure of the state’ that has led to an interest in the emergence of new theatres where other agendas may thrive: these may be located at the geographical margins, in internal frontier zones, and even in the capital city itself where uncontrolled new settlements have proliferated with a remarkable rapidity in recent decades. What they have in common is that they are not constituted by the state and to a large extent are left to their own devices. Secondly, whereas the relationship between class and state has been central to the European research agenda in the 20th century, the spatial turn in Africa partly represents a shift away from mapping social stratification towards an analysis of networks and other lateral ties of connection and obligation: hence migrancy and the politics of belonging have become some of the key lines of enquiry within all the disciplines represented in African studies. One can expect a concern with space to gain further currency in the years to come as international research agendas, and hence funding regimes in the North, are shaped by concerns about the effects of climate change, the growth of criminal and terrorist networks and as the North seeks to seal its borders against African immigrants.

Representatives from a broad variety of disciplines submitted panels and papers which reflect the currency that the spatial turn has gained in African studies. The response almost allows for a mapping of when and how—that is, with which research questions and at what level of theoretical reasoning—the spatial turn has become important for African studies.

In an essentially descriptive way, academics from different disciplines look at how space is utilized (‘space as living space’, the economic utilisation of space, etc.). One of the most obvious observations on the relevance of space is that different forms of space are contested by social groups. Not surprisingly political scientists, sociologists or historians perceive contemporary developments in Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland from the perspective of contested political space. In these and similar cases—for instance post-electoral conflict in Kenya in 2007/8—violence often plays a key role as a resource and mobilising factor. Contesting political space is a about defending or gaining sovereignty. In some African cases this form of sovereignty is no longer, or not necessarily, connected to

the territorial nation-state (cf. Mbembe 2002; Agnew 2005; Engel and Olsen 2009 [forthcoming]). Other forms of contested space are observed in economics: Here people look at policy space, the room of a state to manoeuvre, but also at emergent market spaces or relocating the poor in Africa. The emergence of new religious actors in many parts of Africa, including forms of radical Islam or Pentecostalism, has led to a problematisation of religious space. Others examine how new media entrepreneurs relate to the public sphere ('media space'), how political parties create 'symbolic space', or how the geographies of sport are changing.

Under the impact of the spatial turn a renewed interest grew in the classic field of borderland studies. Anthropological frontier concepts (à la Kopytoff 1987) are being revisited and related to collective identity building processes. Another topic that has been rediscovered in this respect are the non-colonial, 'indigenous' African borders. The general interest of a broad range of academics in borderland studies is reflected by the formation of ABORNE, the African Borderland Research Network (see <http://www.aborne.org>). ABORNE is an interdisciplinary network of researchers interested in all aspects of international borders and trans-boundary phenomena in Africa. The emphasis is largely on borderlands as physical spaces and social spheres, but the network is also concerned with regional flows of people and goods as well as economic processes that may be located at some distance from the geographical border (see Nugent and Asiawaju 1996). So far the focus of the unfolding research agenda is on the changing nature of material borders and the social processes around this; less interest is being paid to social processes of bordering (cf. Newmann 2003).

A classic field for the 'discovery' of space as an analytical category are different sociologies. People working in migration studies are discussing how migration and diaspora politics reshape political space in the country of origin or how translocal networks operate (such as the Fulbe); in these debates the concept of transnational social space (cf. Pries 2001) plays an important role. In urban studies there is an increasing interest in the spatial transformations of African towns and processes of spatial reordering ('navigating urban space').

The latter is closely related to debates on the various ways of 'producing' space. What are the social and cognitive processes which form social, symbolic and imagined spaces? At ECAS 3 academics had an interest in the production of new places through networking and insulating, connecting and withdrawing; and in respacing from

philosophical perspectives (for instance through creating wealth disparities or knowledge orders). Yet others looked at the emergence of topographies of rule, region-building, local appropriations of transnational religious movements, risk management and new social spaces etc. And there was also interest in the making of 'waterscapes' through the respacing of basins, in markets and networks as well as in 'spaces of (in)security' and the spatial effects of social exclusion.

Reflecting on the production of space beyond mere description has given way to what we would call 'reflexive space', i.e. thinking about the meta-theoretical assumptions and the role of different knowledge orders in the production of space. One of the by now well-established ways to do this is by looking at gendered spaces and the re-spacing of gender. After the debate on the Black Atlantic, the discovery of the many middle passages (see Christopher, Pybus and Rediker 2007) has led to the emergence of scholarship on relocating Africa in the Indian Ocean. Geographers reflect on their most important source and representations: spatial knowledge as expressed in cartography. Discussing Africa as a laboratory for medicine and science led to reflections on discursive space and Africa's role in the reproduction of this particular space. Other forms of reflexive space include discussions on fragmented space vs. fluid urbanities, reinventing the international in Africa and space as transition (based on a concept of 'temporal space').

Still, the vast majority of panels and papers at ECAS 3 did not talk about space as an analytical concept, though they clearly worked with important notions of space. This holds true for research on the African Union's new peace and security architecture and various African projects of regional integration (the 'new regionalisms' à la Söderbaum and Shaw 2003). An important spatial dimension can easily be spotted in works on secessionism and autonomy conflicts; on cross-border trade, global value chains, foreign direct investment in Africa; on Africa in various globalisations as well as South-South relations; on African migration to Europe and social remittances; on African cities and cultural imaginations of the African city; and on conflict and identity; on body as space; but also in research on mobile phones, and other connecting technologies; on mobility and transport; as well as various forms of transnational cultural transfers (e.g. in South African resistance politics) or sports hunting.

Seen from a dialectical perspective of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation this kind of research easily can be opened-up to the

language and the different approaches of the spatial turn. In fact, we argue that as a result of the observed and described spatial processes, substantial parts of Africa are witnessing the emergence of new regimes of *territorialisation*: re-ordered states, transnational and sub-national entities, new localities and transborder formations. Without intending, or even being able, to sketch an integrated research agenda on the continents respacing, it seems fruitful to look at two issues in particular: firstly, the question of how this relates to processes of globalization; and secondly, how and why social groups in a specific situation opt for a particular form of territorialisation. The first research field calls for a better understanding of the nexus between time and space, i.e. a historically informed theory of Africa's place in present political, economic and cultural processes of spatial change. The second requires us to conceptualize the social and discursive processes of collective choices on particular forms of territorialisation.

This edited volume exemplifies some disciplinary approaches on African space and space in Africa. We invited a broad spectrum of colleagues to contribute, from literature to history, and from anthropology to political science. In chapter 2 the historian Allen M. Howard of Rutgers University has contributed a sweeping survey in a piece entitled 'Actors, places, regions, and global forces: An essay on the spatial history of Africa since 1700'. Drawing on earlier work on tropical Africa and the 18th to 19th century, Howard's chapter provides an overview on how spatial patterns in Africa have changed over the past 300 years which is stretching to Southern Africa and the 20th century. In different ways, Howard argues, in each period, external forces, the power of states and authorities, and ordinary people's social investments and discourse structured actors' spatial possibilities and mental landscapes, but not in determinist ways. Within various constraints, Africans continue to contest, order and give meaning to places; to think reflexively and strategically; to mobilize networks and associations for gain; to shape cities and regions, and to engage distant sites.

In chapter 3 the political scientists Fredrik Söderbaum from the Centre for African Studies at the University of Göteborg (Sweden) and Ian Taylor who is with the School of International Relations at St. Andrews (Scotland) reflect from a point of view of 'new regionalism' and with an emphasis on micro-regions in an article on 'State, region and space in Africa'. Against the backdrop of neo-patrimonial politics in Africa, Söderbaum and Taylor argue that formal state-led regional projects are,

like many of the states signing up to them, *quasi* in nature. Therefore, if analysts want to observe the 'real' regional respacing on the continent, then micro-regions are the best places to observe such empirical realities and where, from day-to-day, regionalisation helps contribute in some measure, to Africa's survival, if not development.

David Coplan, from the Department of Social Anthropology at Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg (South Africa) offers a systematic comparison of 'Siamese twin towns and unitary concepts in border inequality'. He is looking at international borderlands as separate in space and situation in two cases, the US-Mexico and the South Africa-Lesotho borders. These borders are two of the only borders in the world where vastly different levels of development meet. This chapter marks an initial attempt to both to advance African border theory at the ethnological level, and link border studies in Africa with the established and critical heartland of border studies.

In chapter 5 Anthony Asiwaju from the African University Institute in Imeko (Nigeria), who also happens to be the head of the advisory board for the African Union's border programme, offers a timely piece on 'Space and politics: The African Union Border Programme'. Based on a solemn declaration of the historic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Border Issues held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 7 June 2007, the African Union Border Programme is a four-fold policy instrument targeted on a simultaneous pursuit of (1) accelerated demarcation of the international boundaries between member states; (2) cross-border cooperation focusing on a regional approach to the planning and development of 'Cross-Border Areas' or 'Afregios' ('African Regions'), equivalents of the more familiar 'European Regions' or 'Euregios' in the European integration process; (3) capacity-building with particular reference to relevant knowledge infrastructural innovations and specialized training and research programmes in support of cross-border cooperation initiatives and wider regional integration orientations; and, finally, (4) relevant resource mobilization within and outside Africa (cf. African Union 2007).

Migration studies are foregrounded in chapter 6 where Joris Schapendonk from the Department of Human Geography at Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands) looks at 'Staying put in moving sands. The stepwise migration process of sub-Saharan African migrants heading north'. His chapter takes a strong actor-centred approach. The objective of the chapter is twofold. Firstly, it aims to gain more insights into the migration processes by investigating migrant's flexibility

and dependency. Secondly, this chapter examines the way sub-Saharan African migrants adapt to *and* use ‘en-route places’ in order to understand better the geographical notion of ‘place’ and the impact of mobility on places. African migration is predominantly analysed in terms of social networks which overlooks the importance and particularities of ‘places’. Moreover, theoretically, mobility and ‘place’ are mostly positioned as ‘enemies’ of each other; mobility may lead to *placelessness* or *non-places*.

In chapter 7 Timothy Raeymaekers and Koen Vlassenroot, both with the Conflict Research Group at Ghent University (Belgium) take an interest in how violent conflict has respaced the Democratic Republic of Congo. In their contribution on ‘Respacing Congolese statehood in the midst of crisis and transition’ they propose an explanation for the gradual commodification of Congolese sovereignty among different forms of cooperation and conflict, produced by a variety of types of institutions and agents. It is argued that the growing erosion of state authority in different governable spaces in contemporary Congo does not have to preclude its persistence in terms of images and nationhood. As the Congolese often have it: ‘l’état est moribond, mais pas mort (the state is dying, but not dead).’

And in the final chapter Thomas Hüsken from the *Institut für Ethnologie* of the University of Bayreuth (Germany) analyses the ‘The neotribal competitive order in the borderland of Egypt and Libya’, thus also extending the scope of our volume to Northern Africa.

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ACTORS, PLACES, REGIONS, AND GLOBAL FORCES: AN ESSAY
ON THE SPATIAL HISTORY OF AFRICA SINCE 1700

Allen M. Howard

Over the last three centuries, spatial patterns in sub-Saharan Africa have changed radically.¹ Underlying those changes have been greater integration with global markets and ideas; a massive expansion of population and a widespread physical relocation of people; fundamental shifts in labor processes and capital investment in the natural and built environment; and basic modifications in political structures and processes. About 750,000,000 people now live in sub-Saharan Africa. Whereas urbanization levels were quite low in the 18th century, more than one-third of all people now live in cities, and half soon will. The majority of people are now Muslims or Christians, whereas in 1700 that was true only in a few areas. In the 19th and, especially, 20th centuries, large-scale mineral industries came into existence, farmers converted wide swaths of territory to cash crop production, and foreign companies and settlers established extensive plantations and farms. In response, millions of Africans became migrant laborers. In a familiar story, European colonizers divided the continent by laying down boundaries and establishing new systems of authority and law within them; from the mid-20th century on, African leaders inherited those units. Even where the national project has been notoriously unsuccessful, the bounded territorial state remains the model. National identities have arisen where they did not previously exist, and people have generated and mobilized ethnic, religious, and regional identities, partly to contest state power and resource distribution.

There have been few efforts to conceptualize those changes using spatial analysis, particularly while also incorporating the new social history literature. Earlier, I theorized the spatial history of tropical Africa from the late 18th century to the 1920s (Howard 2005a). This article expands the geographic reach of my analysis to southern Africa and the time frame to the late 20th century, and applies other analytic

¹ I wish to thank Lindsay F. Braun, Sarah Howard, Ben Twagira, Laura Ann Twagira, and the editors of this issue for their valuable comments.

tools.² This essay seeks to understand how global and regional forces have affected local spatial patterns, how people have shaped space locally and regionally within the constraints of the larger forces, and how space itself has been an active factor in history.

Conceptual Framework

There are several ways to conceive of space: physical, social, and analytic. Physical space is what physicists study, surveyors measure, and people cross. Social space is defined by materiality, relationships, perceptions, and meanings. Analytic space consists of abstractions people use to understand the complexities of physical and social space, usually by applying formal conceptual tools. Of greatest importance here is social space, but social space is linked with physical and analytic space. From my perspective, physical space becomes social space as people create relationships by interacting with one another, building and naming things, giving meaning to particular places, perceiving the similarities and differences among places, discoursing about the relationship of people distributed over space—and so on. All such acts are contested, but general agreement or understanding about social space may be reached among a given group of people, at least temporarily.

It is usually not very fruitful, however, to interpret the past or present by using the rather vague terms “space” and “social spaces.” The notion “social space” lacks precision. It is better to define and use consistently such concepts as place, network, and region. To talk precisely about place involves examining, for instance, actions-in-places, meanings of physical structures, the ways power shapes places, and how social reproduction occurs around places (Agnew 1993). To understand relationships among people spread over territory, it is necessary to describe and interpret both the patterning and content of peoples’ networks and to look at how associations, institutions, and power shape the actions of spatially dispersed people. Regions are created and sustained through people’s mobility and exchanges, by investments in places and territorially extensive technologies, and by flows of all types. Regions, in one sense, are analytic concepts; they are “discovered” by scholars and others who assemble data and look for pat-

² North Africa has not been included.

terns. But, ordinary people are also aware of regions: when they speak and act they make reference to the relationships among people and places and they abstract from their understandings. Landscapes are the mental constructs that interacting people and collectivities build to describe, give meaning to, and talk about the natural and social space around them. Of course, who comprises a collectivity constantly shifts, and individuals and smaller groups may share only part of a more widely conceived landscape. It goes without saying that the meanings of places and landscapes are always contested and changing and that people bring notions of the past to bear upon the meanings of places and landscapes. Though contested, places and regions do have some permanence and, along with larger forces, structure peoples' actions. With these more precise concepts in mind, it is possible to talk in short-hand ways about space-forming and space-maintaining processes across time.

My argument begins with actors. The sheer physicality of bodies must be a starting point for a spatial approach to history. Bodies occupy geographic space, perform work, and are reproduced sexually and socially (Nast and Pile 1998). Only through work, intensified by tools and machines, can objects in material space be produced. In certain fundamental ways, power is always applied through and upon bodies in particular sites. Actors are people who have bodies, emotions, and conscious minds and who both engage in space-shaping transactions and are influenced by dynamic spatial patterns. A major thesis here is that gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion are not fixed "identities" brought to interactive situations, but are constantly being produced through interaction and exchanges in places, through networks, and in dynamic regions (Howard 2003a: 201–223).

In an earlier essay, I examined the household in its many forms as one of the most significant nodal institutions in pre-colonial tropical Africa. I will not repeat that analysis here and will look at only a few kinds of households, for instance, royal palaces. It is important to stress, however, that in all periods, most actors have been based in a household of one type or another and that households often have been linked with other important places and have been at the center of networks. Furthermore, changes in the nature of households and in the relations of people in households often serves as a barometer of other spatial changes because intra-household relations were affected by larger forces and because peoples' responses to such forces often involved household strategies and internal struggles.

During this long period, people created uncountable new places: residences of all types; markets, docks, and rail stations; burial grounds, shrines, mosques, and churches; palaces, district offices, and military bases; and towns and cities. Places also were destroyed, or neglected and left to crumble. To select among innumerable sites and look for patterns, it is necessary to determine what places people valued at different times and to concentrate on places that help us understand other spatial processes, such as network formation. People form networks in order to provide support, make things happen, and share ideas. Historical networks can be described and analyzed for their extension, density, content, and other qualities. (Howard and Skinner 1984) In this survey, however, it is only possible to discuss general features of networks and broad changes in their configurations. Through their networks, Africans have forged a great variety of associations, particularly in the 20th century. Like institutions, associations typically have both a nodal quality and territorial extension that can be assessed by examining the people's actions in places and across space.

Over this 300-year period, new formal regions, as defined by fixed boundaries or the relative homogeneity of internal features, have come into existence, and older ones have been greatly modified. All present-day states are formal regions, as were their colonial antecedents. Laws, currencies, and official languages demonstrate the importance of formal regions. Formal regions defined by ecological characteristics have also changed significantly, as witnessed by the development of zones of monocultural cash cropping. Great changes in functional, or interactive, regions also occurred during this period. Regions, and the places that helped constitute them, were given form by collectivities who exercised space-shaping social power, often while being affected by global or macro-regional forces (Pred 1990). For instance, religious movements produced regions by forming networks, establishing institutions, reconfiguring local social arrangements, and giving places new meaning. Such processes were often contested from within and by opponents, and, of course, many efforts to implement specific spatial changes failed.

18th and 19th Centuries

In the 18th and 19th centuries, individuals and collectivities at the local and regional levels both influenced and were deeply affected by certain broad currents of power, economic demand, and ideas ema-

nating from within Africa and external to it. Historians would probably agree that among the great space-shaping forces of that period were the spread of Islam; the external and internal slave trades; the growth of “legitimate” trade; and war, raiding, and state building by Africans, Europeans, Arabs, and Afro-Arabs. In order to apply analytic tools and spatial theories to historical processes in any period, it is necessary to ask rather large questions: How did such forces shape localities and regions, thus framing people’s actions? How did people generate new spatial patterns as they engaged in and responded to war, trade, religion, and other forces? How did such forces affect peoples’ sense of landscapes, and how did people struggle over the meaning of places? These topics are vast, and only a few patterns can be suggested here. In subsequent sections, I engage questions of comparable scope for the colonial and post-colonial eras.

A few examples provide some sense of the rich variety of sacred sites and regional practices that existed during this period. An oracular center for Mwali, the High God, flourished in the Matopos hills of present-day Zimbabwe. As Ranger writes, the ‘rocks of the Matopos became a symbol of God’s endurance,’ mercy, and authority, and God spoke through them. Rocks, caves, pools, and flowing water constituted a sacred, meaningful landscape for Shona-speakers (Ranger 1999: 20–23). Adepts who visited acquired place images in their minds, and when back home spoke in rich language about their experiences. Throughout Africa, such centers rose and declined along with their deities; conversely, some centers retained their significance as beliefs changed. The town of Notsie became by the mid-1400s the site for the regional deity Mawu, which was venerated by people in what are now Togo, Benin, and Ghana. However, by the late 17th century, Mawu had declined after the kingdom in which it was located had been conquered; new deities and new centers associated with wealth and power arose (Greene 2002: 15–17). In many areas, centers devoted to deities existed along with Muslim centers, or with sites for veneration of royal ancestors, shrines of affliction, and anti-witchcraft shrines—each with its own region. Such regions overlapped and, through time, fluctuated in scale. From such centers, ideas and practices spread. If communities learned of the efficacy of particular deities or shrines, they might import them. People commonly had a variety of spiritual options.

As Muslims spread the faith during the 18th and especially 19th centuries, they carried out various space-altering activities. Perhaps most well known are the networks and states created by leaders of

reform movements who built cities, mosques, schools, and institutions which had spatial impact (D. Robinson 2000; Alpers 2000). By honoring Islamic law, people altered their behavior in courts, households, and markets, and gave those sites new meaning. In many nominally Muslim states, however, rulers accepted the continuation of indigenous practices, for instance, those centering around protective deities associated with the land or kin groups (Meunier 2001: 72–81). Alphas, marabouts, teachers, traders, and artisans carried the faith to numerous towns and villages outside the Muslim states. Such peripatetic specialists gave rise to extensive commercial and spiritual webs which promoted further travel and exchange. In the places they settled, people blended indigenous and Muslim beliefs and practices, for instance, in divination procedures (Colleyn 2005). People contested sites of practice and debated what was proper and what not. Actions-in-places and between places were influenced by global and regional currents in Islamic thought and practice.

The Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades peaked in the 18th and early 19th centuries, reflecting growing demand in the Americas and elsewhere for labor and the commodities enslaved people produced. Traders, state authorities, war leaders, and raiders responded to demand and served their own social and political goals by developing mechanisms for enslaving and exchanging captives. Their actions and the responses to them both destroyed and created places and regions in profound ways. In Angola, professional raiders and traders advanced a slaving frontier steadily eastward (Miller 1988). The Aro of south eastern Nigeria generated new regions as they expanded geographically, settled in centers, built shrines, and established networks of credit and exchange (Northrup 1978; Nwokeji 2000). Slavers were able to convert commodities into space-shaping power, notably in East Africa, where warlords and raiding and trading groups built networks between the coast and interior. They exchanged enslaved people and ivory for guns, gunpowder, and other imports to support armies, exert hegemony over territories, and form inland trade centers (Alpers 1975). Late in the 19th century, the Great Lakes area was affected by traders from the Indian Ocean, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Congo. Militarized states that did little exporting engaged in substantial internal slaving that altered regions and patron-client and kinship networks (Médard 2007). All in all, during the era, over 9,000,000 Africans were taken forcibly to the Americas and millions more to places in the Indian Ocean and western Asia. The extraction of their labor power was therefore shifted to

overseas sites (Lovejoy 2000; Eltis, Behrendt, and Richardson 2005). In general, two men were sent into the Atlantic for every one woman. African slave-holders thus disproportionately used the labor, reproductive, and social reproductive capacities of enslaved women to enhance their households and space-shaping resources (Robertson and Klein 1983; Howard 2005a: 87–92).

The impact of the Atlantic slave trade varied greatly over time and space. People developed complex spatial strategies that mixed resistance and accommodation, as revealed through sites, networks, and region-forming processes. People built fortifications to extend their reach as traders or ward off enslavement, conquest, and death (Diouf 2003). Under the pressure of slaving during the 17th and 18th centuries, Balanta (in modern Guinea-Bissau) abandoned their dispersed settlements and concentrated in fortified *tabancas*. They reorganized the gendered production of food, becoming prodigious farmers of rice, and modified other social arrangements. While subject to attack by powerful neighbors, Balanta raided other Balanta, more distant groups, and shipping on the rivers (Hawthorne 2003: 11–12, 121–133ff.). Thus, Balanta spatial reorganization involved an interplay of internal struggles and external forces.

Other people with decentralized polities carried out spatial changes in the context of regional and global forces. In the second half of the 19th century, western Serengeti farmers reorganized themselves in the face of drought, disease, and attacks by Maasai raiders. They borrowed age sets from the Maasai but employed them uniquely. Elders sent their sons to different age sets, a spatial strategy that protected a kin group from losing all of its sons at one time during fighting, while giving access to dispersed resources (thus insuring against loss through drought or other causes). The strategy also created spatial order by forging age bonds among different kin groups (Shetler 2005). In northwestern Sierra Leone, rulers of mini-kingdoms, stranger-traders, war leaders, and other notables formed multiple centers and complex alliances (Howard and Skinner 1984). Such big men “marked” the region: their space-shaping capacities and their reputations were associated with their households and towns, their networks of allies and clients, and their military and political actions in particular places. In public dramas and discourse, residents “re-marked” upon big men and events-in-places, which affected the spatial landscape. Ordinary men and women, youth, and slaves both used and by-passed the dominant spatial patterns in order to trade, become military recruits, or escape

control by the powerful (Howard 2005b). In northern Gabon, clan genealogies encoded memories of individual and group mobility, shifting social identities, and extensive matrimonial and commercial alliances (Cinnamon 2005). Bugandan clan accounts reveal a deep history of widely dispersed therapeutic networks and of sites where people converged to 'seek solutions to collective problems...such as famine, epidemics, and warfare...' (Kodesh 2008: 204ff.). Dynamic, spatial approaches to kinship thus offer alternatives to structural analyses.

A spatial approach also suggests ways to go beyond the stalemated state-stateless dichotomy to identify spatial practices that might be hidden under the label of "state," to facilitate comparisons, and to re-focus on regional dynamics. Most large kingdoms and empires actually comprised subsidiary units with capitals; allied and conquered groups typically had their own cores. The larger polities therefore employed various centralizing devices: administrative offices (the *wazir* in the Sokoto caliphate, for example), tax collecting mechanisms, judicial institutions, and royal or "national" rituals (Last 1967). Kings, royals, and elites created rituals with centripetal qualities, which others challenged. In such dramas, bodies were critically important. In Asante, the annual *odwira* was elaborated and institutionalized during the mid-18th century as the state expanded and became more centralized. Stretching over an Asante month, *odwira* included a ritual that identified the Asantehene (king) with 'the awesome powers of death and night.' In other ceremonies officials were punished, political promotions and demotions handed out, and a "didactic exposition" of the submission of conquered kingdoms re-enacted (McCaskie 1995: 226–27 and 240–42). In southern Africa, armed leaders based in defensible sites created regions by attracting and holding followers through military strength, marriage, gifting of cattle, provision of land, and use of deliberative councils (Etherington 2001: 45–93ff.). For instance, through such processes Moshweshwe forged the Sotho kingdom, the basis for modern-day Lesotho (Thompson 1975: 60–69, 171–189; Eldredge 1993: 36–41ff.).

Capitals were sites of factions and intrigue where rivals advanced their own interests. In Buganda, queen mothers held authority independent of kings; like kings, they had prime ministers, appointed ministers and chiefs, and collected and redistributed tributes. Their residences were separate sites of power (Hanson 2002: 221–222). Queen mothers in Asante lacked such a parallel administrative apparatus, but served as poles of opposition to Asantehenes and built networks of support for

their sons and eliminated rivals (Wilks 1993a). Royal palaces, linked to subjects through networks and displays, were major sites of integration and contention. Among the most important networks were those established through royal marriage, concubinage, and the enslavement of women. In Dahomey, rulers coerced hundreds, even thousands of *ahosi* (royal wives; 'neither fully slaves, nor fully free') to reside in the palace. By remaining in contact with their homes, *ahosi* provided kings information and alliances tapping all corners of the state. *Ahosi*, in turn, used networks to acquire wealth in people and politically valuable knowledge (Bay 1998: 142–149ff.). According to Nast, the palace at Kano provided 'over 140,000 square meters for monumental religious expression... a massive theater wherein the political cultural centrality of Islamicized, patriarchal control over reproduction and knowledge was staged' (Nast 2005: 3). As in Dahomey and elsewhere, women were core actors and gender relations were re-negotiated over time. Prior to the early 19th century, royal concubines and daughters controlled the large palace granaries, a major material (food) and symbolic (fertility and fecundity) resource which afforded them political influence (Nast 2005: 46–55). As the caliphate consolidated itself, however, the leadership negotiated '...away some of the most important power of palace concubines and women more generally' (Nast 2005: 90). This shift reflected fuller monetarization of the regional economy, greater reliance on slave-based plantation production, and changes in palace personnel, in other words, spatial shifts at several levels (Nast 2005: 103–109, 133–138ff.).

As Kano's history illustrates, spatial changes were not socially neutral. Men and women and youth and elders, contesting over gender and generational expectations and relations, had different capacities to respond to external forces. For example, as the slave and ivory trades expanded in East Africa, provincial chiefs and lesser rulers in Buganda were able to obtain directly goods they previously had received through kings, thus weakening kings' authority. In the process, queen mothers' role in politics also fell (Hanson 2002). Among the Balanta, *tabancas* were sites of gender and generational contention as male elders sought ways of retaining women and youth who were able to participate in the larger economy, for instance as agents of slavers (Hawthorne 2003:11–12, 121–133ff.).

People created dynamic, interactive regions on the ocean perimeter of the sub-continent. While foreign and internal demand stimulated the rise of such regions, their particular qualities were determined by

practices. Thus, people developed place-based institutions, such as the landlord-stranger relationship on the Upper Guinea Coast, and networks, such as the kin and political alliances around the slave castles of the Gold Coast (Wright 2004; Kea 1982). In a chain of towns on the Indian Ocean littoral, Swahili-speakers and others forged a hierarchical urban culture. Towns were from the elite perspective defined by the community of believers (*umma*), mosque, tombs of holy men, and houses of notables (Horton and Middleton 2000: 123–126). The residents' mental landscapes of people were affected by their alliances with people from abroad, knowledge about overseas places, synthetic cultural practices, and in some instances travel beyond the shores.

The difficulty in demarcating historical periods is demonstrated by such coastal sites. As Lagos grew in the 19th century, its merchant and political notables, men and women, participated in the slave trade and held enslaved people. As Mann writes: 'Beyond financing the buildup of canoes, weapons, and subordinates of different kinds, the slave trade paid for the consumption and redistribution of imported goods, which helped create and maintain bonds of loyalty between members of the ruling oligarchy and followers' (Mann 2007: 81). The enslaved and formerly enslaved, formed commercial and social networks, self-help associations, and mosques. Labor demands grew as Lagos' role in exporting palm products expanded, which slowed emancipation (Mann 2007: 203–236, 313–325). In 18th century Cape Town, Boers held many thousands of enslaved people in farmsteads, urban households, and the "Lodge" owed by the Dutch East India Company (Shell 1994: 160–227, 285–329). Even before Britain abolished slavery in 1834, it was declining because large numbers of slaves freed themselves through wage and artisan labor. This shift followed a change in the city's role as a mediator between an increasingly commercialized hinterland and the wider Atlantic world. Slaves, those recently freed, and the urban poor built bonds among one another through networks, in part based on Islam (Bank 1994; Shell 1994: 330–394). Boers who trekked inland took slaves and apprentices with them, and maintained some forms of slavery in the Transvaal until the 1890s (Lovejoy 2000: 239–240; Morton 1994).

In sum, in 18th and 19th century Africa, bodies commonly were subject to patriarchal and, in some areas, royal control, but patriarchy and royalty were in flux. The majority of people engaged in subsistence farming, but there also were many ritual, commercial, and political specialists. Most people lived in households, which were adaptable

institutions that varied greatly in scale. People with wealth and power built sizeable households, and, in some kingdoms, palaces were large, centralizing institutions. Changes within households and communities reflected struggles among members and strategies that people adapted in the face of regional and global forces. During the highpoint of the slave trade, slavers engaged in space-destroying actions and built space-shaping networks and institutions. The networks of most “ordinary” people were limited in scale in extension and density, meaning in the number of members and the types of relations. On the other hand, networks of traders, Islamic and other religious specialists, and power holders often reached long distances and were diverse in composition. All such nodes and networks helped give shape to regions, and in turn affected others’ actions in space. This period was typified by a multiplication and differentiation of regions, as people responded in various ways to the spread of Islam, the slave trades, war, and state-related processes. Thus, places, networks, and regions were dynamic, and conditioned people’s actions.

Colonial Period

Elsewhere, I have argued that in spatial terms, there was a long period of transition between the pre-colonial and colonial periods (Howard 2005a). In most places in tropical Africa, at least, the colonial imprint upon spatial patterns was not fixed until about 1920, after decades of adjustment and accommodation by colonizers and colonized. Furthermore, struggles over some pre-colonial sites have continued up to the present. The following two sections offer a brief overview of changes in places during the 20th century. It is impossible to do justice to the complex meanings of sites and the contestations around them, so in each section I focus on religion to reveal spatial dynamics around places and to avoid a teleology that assumes the forward advance of Christianity and Islam.

European imperialists used violence not only to put down resistance but also establish and patrol colonial boundaries and bring about other spatial changes. Colonizers attempted to make artificial containers into formal and functional regions by imposing laws, administration, official languages, and currencies. As Nugent and Asiwaju have put it: colonial boundaries

...were intended to demarcate competing spheres of colonial authority [and] to classify populations in order to govern them. The frontier mattered because it defined which people belonged to which colonial state.... Frequently there was haggling between colonial powers, which turned on a desire to monopolize particular sets of Africans as much as it involved competition for ownership of colonial space. In that sense, the colonial state did not behave too differently from its pre-colonial forebears, for whom people were normally considered a more strategic resource than mere land (Nugent and Asiwaju 1996: 2–5).

Africans were hardly passive. They influenced the initial demarcation, created new trading systems across borders, and smuggled (Nugent 1996: 48–60; Nugent 2002; Howard forthcoming).

Colonial space, however, was established unevenly over the land; the imprint varied greatly from colony to colony and within colonies. Officials shared ideas within imperial networks that linked metropolises to colonies and colonies to colonies, yet administrators in each colony were obliged to re-fashion policy and ideology in dialectic interaction with local realities (Lester 2001). Europeans sought to shape African landscapes by erecting administrative headquarters and missionary stations, silencing certain local histories while privileging others, creating ethnic and racial segregation, charting terrains through surveying and map making, and intervening in African spatial institutions. Administrators (and missionaries) sought to change rural places at the village level, particularly households, through taxes, agricultural and food policy, and other means (Moore and Vaughan 1994). In settler territories, authorities mapped and regularized land holding as part of a racial and ethnic order (Crais 2002: 68–95). Braun has documented the foundational role surveyors and cartographers played in fixing spatial arrangements in South Africa. Though their sciences were inexact in the initial land takeovers, what they inscribed on the land and in cadastral survey books was backed by law. Africans and their proponents negotiated to preserve claims and access, where possible (Braun 2008). Myers, following Timothy Mitchell, has employed the concept of enframing to describe the ways colonial authorities sought to shape space in order to assert their power and authority and to control Africans' movements, work, thought, and emotions. Colonizers erected buildings to dramatize power relations: governors' residences, district headquarters, courts, and police stations. The larger ones were intended to incite awe, respect, and even fear through their size, unique designs, and, strategic locations (Myers 2003). In some capitals, cathedrals were the largest and most ornate buildings (Martin 1995: 30).

Architects and officials designed or re-designed central business districts and other areas, in part to implement racial segregation. Plazas, parks, boulevards, and grids of streets were constructed to impress, channel, and exclude Africans, and to create districts in which whites felt “at home” and justified in their dominion by the “civilization” introduced (Goerg 1997). Urban segregation also was achieved by the demarcation of African-only areas. Places have great impact on imagination and behavior because of what happens, or what people believe happens, in and around them. Thus, a governor had to be seen entering and leaving his residence and office, accompanied by armed escorts, his body adorned with a plumed hat and medal-festooned uniform. When he returned to his palace after parading, greeting chiefs, or reading declarations, his aura was invested in the buildings, and later governors absorbed it. The colonial spatial agenda depended upon using specialists and African intermediaries and applying new technologies, but also violence (Braun 2008; Lawrance, Osborn and Roberts 2003: 3–10). At the local level, the figures of the District Officer and Commandant incited fear, as they were masters of the lash and prison door, although they could be mocked as well.³ The bodily realities of the colonial spatial order was most pronounced in the public works projects and forced crop delivery schemes that extracted labor from Africans. Such abuses were especially notorious in the Belgian Congo and Portuguese territories, but existed in all. Often such demands were compounded by soil erosion, drought, and broader economic forces (Mandala 1990: 218–268; Likaka 1997).

When the Brethren in Christ missionaries and their African converts entered the Matopos Hills in the early 1900s, they sought to “confront and deify” the shrines of Mwali, part of a plan for draining those places of their sacred significance. To block devotees from gaining access, the newcomers erected churches and schools across paths to the major shrines. During the colonial era, Matopos became drawn into ethnic politics, and, after the end of white minority rule, rival claimants to authority and contesting factions battled over the rain-making shrine at Njelele. Local elders and religious figures appealed for its sacral qualities to be restored (Ranger 1999: 51–53, 99–129, 275–279). In the Ewe-speaking area during the colonial era, missionaries established a

³ This mix of fear and mocking of whites and their sites of authority was captured brilliantly by the novelist Ferdinand Oyono.

base at Notsie, and Ewe reshaped their identity around that center. Veneration of Nyigbla, an agent of the deity Mawu, boosted the importance of Anlo, which also became a Christian center. Throughout the Ewe area, a complex layering of beliefs, coupled with a forgetting and altering of the religious content of particular sites, resulted in periods of co-existence and contestation among adherents of indigenous practices and between them and Christians. This resulted in gradual changes in the meanings of places (Greene 2002: 14–34, 109–137). In central Africa and other areas, as well, people continued their affinity with local cults of affliction which were perhaps even more dynamic than before, as ideas and leaders flowed along transport routes and networks of trade and migration (van Binsbergen 143–154).

Missionaries not uncommonly drew up elaborate maps of their stations and the lands around in the belief that the structure of buildings and overall design would instill values and behaviors among converts. (Braun 2008) Because boarding schools lifted African pupils out of their social milieu and typically were segregated by sex, missionaries considered them ideal sites for inculcating a gendered Christianity. Girls and boys boarding schools and mission stations generally promoted “a colonized version of the bourgeois domestic ideal,” in which girls were to become good Christian wives and mothers through schooling, recreation, sermons, domestic training, and supervision of their weddings (West 2002: 69ff.; Schmidt 1992: 122–154). Miescher writes that

The spatial organization of Abetifi [Boys] Boarding School [in colonial Ghana] underscored the importance of African teachers who were not only in charge but served as main agents in transmitting gender ideals. . . . As supervisor, the missionary, from his veranda, had a ‘bird’s eye-view [sic] of the entire school—teachers and pupils, as well as outer parts of the school—the garden, water-pump, the kitchen, wash-house and other out-houses’.

The layout of the mission complemented doctrine and schooling in helping to generate what Miescher calls “Presbyterian masculinity” (Miescher 2005: 64–71). On the other hand, African Christians created spheres of autonomy through numerous independent churches, while Muslim orders built dar al Islam (land of faith) in contrast to the European-framed dar al Kufr (land of unbelief) (Babou 2005). In particular towns, there often was a great deal of rivalry among religious orders, each with networks and institutions, and between more religiously-oriented and more secular Muslims over matters of belief,

lines of authority, definitions of masculinity, and other issues (Meunier 1998: 529–537).

Africa became much more deeply integrated with the world capitalist economy through complex region-forming processes. Colonial administrators and companies built rail, road, and port infrastructures and also production facilities which brought great spatial differentiation within and among colonies. Africans migrated as rural laborers, miners, traders, students, and, increasingly, urban informal sector workers.⁴ Besides the movements to white owned farms in settler colonies, large numbers of people in West Africa moved from drier and generally poorer inland territories to cash crop producing areas nearer the coast, most notably in African-owned cocoa plantations. Migrants created long-lasting networks cutting across colonial and later national boundaries, making northern settlements increasingly dependent on income transfers. Women as well as men were rural workers; in fact, significant numbers labored on plantations and settler farms under regimes no different from men. With their spouses and partners and the kin and neighbors they left behind, they forged new regions.

Much of the migration to mines was long distance. Largest in scale was that to South Africa, which in any given year involved hundreds of thousands of workers from up to a dozen “sending” colonies. Counting mines in the Congo, Zambia, Botswana, and Namibia, as well as South Africa, much of the sub-continent was criss-crossed with human webs. Wives and lovers, money, cultural practices, and diseases also flowed along those channels, giving rise to new regions. Not all such movement was long-distance. Mushroom mining towns such as Enugu (Nigeria, coal) and Marampa (Sierra Leone, iron) were mainly populated by workers from their immediate hinterlands. The migrants’ networks were dense and diffuse, meaning that miners had close personal ties. They carried their mining experience and ideas, along with their wages, back home (Brown 2003).

Men and women experienced colonial spaces differently and in highly embodied ways, and also had different capacities to shape space. In South Africa and Rhodesia male miners were segregated in single sex barracks, and owners and officials attempted to manipulate them through food, liquor, and sex (Van Onselen 1976). Women’s

⁴ Long-distance migration was not new, as Soninke and Kru history illustrates (Manchuelle 1997; Frost 1999).

bodies and their movements in colonial spaces were subject to special controls, particularly in settler colonies where white authorities feared African urbanization, contagion, and “racial mixing. In colonial Zimbabwe, African women were not issued passes or registration certificates which meant that ‘...their legal presence in towns [was] contingent upon having a husband “in employment in the township” and on being able to prove it.’ Like patriarchal-minded African men, colonial authorities feared the movement of unattached women. Officials subjected women to *chibeura*, vaginal examinations, ostensibly while seeking to control venereal disease (Jackson 2002: 191–215).

Women and men carved out urban spheres of work and managed networks reaching beyond the cities. Women producers of *adire* cloth in Abeokuta built upon the pre-colonial industry and, using imported cloth, developed dyeing operations based in their compounds that constituted a large share of the town’s economy. Local and foreign traders integrated them into extensive colonial and international trading circuits (Byfield 2002). Women with different urban resources developed different strategies and maintained different kinds of rural links. Some Nairobi women who worked as prostitutes acquired urban property, while others helped their rural parents (White 1990:103–125ff.). The places from which migrants came mattered greatly: some reached cities with valuable resources, such as education, while others did not. In South Africa, personal resources and the time of migration affected the capacity of migrant women—most of whom were domestics—to accumulate, maintain networks, and invest in their rural places of birth, especially in housing (Bozzoli and Nkotsoe 1991).

Cities became the locus of struggles between colonial states, municipal authorities, employers, workers, and other immigrants over wages and working conditions and also access to public areas, housing, and land (F. Cooper 1983). Violations of laws regarding commerce often reflected struggles over sites in central business districts (Howard 2003b). Authorities sought to impose order on what they perceived as unruly cities by labeling Africans, especially younger men, vagrants or criminals, even though most theft indicate poverty not hardened criminality (Burton 2005: 116–200). Particularly in South Africa, well organized gangs fought over and exerted control in territories in Durban, Soweto, and other urban settings. The networks of some gangs reached into neighboring countries into mine compounds and some neighboring countries, such as Lesotho (Glaser: 2000: 21–77; Kynoch 2005: 77–83). Gangs not only threatened authorities’ hold, but worried

respectable African classes who, while distrusting police, wanted safe urban spaces (Kynoch 2003).

The most notorious forms of urban segregation took place in the white settler territories, above all in South Africa, where locations, mine compounds, and urban single-sex hostels were fundamental devices for the control of African bodies and maintenance of a spatial order that privileged whiteness. The first administrative interventions were around public health and disease.⁵ In the 1920's through 1940's, "central state administrators" created "locations" to control African urban populations. After 1948, apartheid instituted huge townships with rationalized street and housing designs and a hierarchy of local African authorities supervised by whites. Eventually, the racialization of space was applied at all scales, as approximately 3,500,000 Africans suffered forced removals and other relocations (United Nations Center Against Apartheid). Residents, organized by the ANC, Communist Party, and others resisted the implementation of removals, rents, and top-down administrative controls through non-violent protests, uprisings, and bargaining about places. In the 1990s, civic organization asserted popular control of space (J. Robinson 1996: 58–80, 142–174, 205–223).

A particular manifestation of racial capitalism was the single-sex hostel. Elder states succinctly the logic underlying that system:

Apartheid was premised upon a procreative tension: the spatial fracturing of the black family unit, but not its destruction. Designers of apartheid policy realized that by stringing black heteropatriarchal bonds of desire and responsibility across space and time, white wealth and the impoverished reproduction of black labor would be assured and secured (Elder 2003: 71).

By the 1980s, women began to live in male hostels with their partners and children, eventually forcing modifications in policy, though not an elimination of hostels (Elder 2003; Ramphele 1993). In the copperbelts of the Congo and Northern Rhodesia, women were present in the mining areas, although authorities tried to limit their autonomy. Communities developed and women contributed to strikes and the growth of class identity (Parpart 1986).

⁵ In early colonial Nairobi, officials combined a fear of plague with racial ideologies to remove the central bazaar and create segregated urban spaces (Murunga 2005: 98–130).

During the colonial era, Africans used places to struggle over and shape social relations in places and also contested the meanings of places. Through interaction and discourse, men and women produced gender, generational and class practices and identities and also produced spatial patterns that then influenced subsequent actions (Howard 2003a: 202ff.; Lindsay and Miescher 2003: 7ff.). Brown has shown how enslaved Igbo-speakers were sent by their masters into the coal mines of Enugu, where, through labor processes, they created new identities as workers who demanded their freedom and rights as men (Brown 2003). Nigerian railway workers became adult men through labor on the trains and in the towns: their wages went into bride wealth and maintaining urban households as “breadwinners” (Lindsay 2003). Sites of urban informal labor and leisure were highly contested. Akyeampong writes that in the mining and rail centers of the Gold Coast,

the low wages paid to male laborers, the unequal sex ratio in such working-class towns, and absence of the ‘comforts of home’ granted women a special place in the social reproduction of urban wage labor. As sellers of cooked food, retailers of alcoholic drinks, and prostitutes, women lubricated the engines of capitalist production and urban social formation...

Their work autonomy and income also gave them new realms of choice about sexual alliances, marriage, and residence, thus challenging the control of elders (Akyeampong 1996: 48). In towns, young men gained incomes and were able to buy alcohol and enjoy leisure time in bars; they challenged the authority of elders, who were used to controlling the youths’ alcohol consumption, sexuality and labor. Elders allied with missionaries and officials in efforts to regulate behavior in bars and other urban sites, efforts that often failed (Akyeampong 1996: 70–115).

People came to cities with identities, languages, and knowledge of various cultural practices, and there re-shaped identities. Given the multiplicity of communities and the fluidity of situations, many possibilities were open to people. Rituals, riots and other upheavals, and even opportunities for changing dress enabled residents and migrants, including formerly enslaved people, to challenge authorities and assert new rights (Glassman 1995; Fair 2001: 64–101). New ethnic formations came into existence. For instance, beginning in the 19th century, migrants to Freetown created and re-created “tribes” through processes whereby headmen assisted newcomers in finding jobs and hous-

ing, bargained with colonial authorities about governing migrants, and competed with other ethnic leaders. Elders and group members built schools, dance associations, and men's and women's *ja'amas*. Through interaction in such sites as courts, headmen's residences, and mosques and churches, Freetownians forged new generational and gender identities and relations (Harrell-Bond, Howard, and Skinner 1978). Urban dwellers created networks, associations, and places for entertainment beyond the reach of missionaries and officials, and such sites produced and expressed gender and class. These included dance halls, public streets for dance groups, bars, and clubs. In post World War Two Brazzaville, dance bars could be found filled with '...groups of stylishly and richly dressed young women, who ostentatiously showed off the latest fashions in *pagnes* and short dresses, hairstyles, make-up, jewellery and head-scarves. They also composed and performed songs and dances to entertain the clientele...' In nightspots, on soccer fields, and at other sites, African men differentiated themselves in terms of occupations and class through clothing and produced new cultural practices (Martin 1995: 138, 161–172; Fair 2001: 226–264). In South African cities, jazz musicians and singers, black and white, created unique sounds blending indigenous and American sources, and the halls and clubs were sites of expression not found elsewhere, until suppressed by authorities (Ballantine 1993).

Artists who moved about collected, interpreted, and circulated the feelings and ideas held by residents. The renowned Zanzibari *taraab* singer, Sidi Binti Saad, at first sang only in Swahili, the language of the poor who lived in the N'gambo section, but she acquired Arabic and learned classical performance forms so that she could move with ease in the Stone Town section, where she performed for the Sultan and conveyed popular dissatisfaction to the elite (Fair 2001: 169–225). Men moving back and forth from rural home to urban work not only forged social networks but gave content to those networks and meaning to their space-forming experiences. The *lifela* songs of Sotho migrant workers provided 'a powerful vehicle both for changing self-identity on the mines and for reconstructing an identity continuous with life in Lesotho upon their return' (Coplan 1997: 32). Through physical movement and cultural production, migrants formed interactive regions.

Lawrance has drawn attention to another kind of functional or interactional region, the periurban area. The periurban area in the predominantly Ewe-speaking area around Lome, Togo, comprised

numerous settlements and small towns.⁶ It was defined by the density of interaction among people, the flow of people, goods, and ideas, and the accretion of meaning around interconnected places. The circulation of narratives and knowledge helped develop anti-colonial dissent expressed through vodou and, later, nationalism among non-elites. Nugent has revised thinking about interactional regions by focusing on the economic, cultural, and political practices of people living on either side of 20th century borders. Although colonialists formally constructed the Gold Coast-Togo boundary, local actors, including immigrants attracted by commercial opportunities, actively generated regions that spanned both sides of the border. Such regions that had unique characteristics developed through smuggling, cocoa farming, land litigation, and other practices (Nugent 2002: 59–107). Where people produced commercial and cultural regions that were responses to spatial realities and vested interests on the ground, such regions tended to continue over time, despite political efforts to modify them. Independent Ghanaian governments at times attempted to crack down on smugglers, but eventually returned to the colonial-era policy of border-management that accepted a substantial level of illicit border crossing (Nugent 2002: 231–271).

In the colonial era, many of the older kinds of households were eliminated or reduced in size and significance. This reflected the end of slavery, but also the weakening ability of elders to control youth and women. Some palaces and households of leading traders and religious figures remained quite sizeable and important. Christian mission stations, the centers of Islamic orders, and administrative and commercial towns became important nodes. People built great numbers of churches, mosques, schools, markets, and social clubs, and generated local and extensive networks connected with work, education, and religion. Regions were shaped through the flow of people, money, commodities, and ideas, particularly along borders, around towns and mines, and in cash crop production zones. Especially in settler colonies and extractive settings, space was shaped by capital and by concepts of race, often through harsh transgressions upon bodies. Nodes and the

⁶ Lawrance writes: 'By the 1920s and thirties, no part of Eweland could be considered rural, or at least rural in the sense of Africanist literature about rural life and experience. Instead, Ewe men and women were within a colonial sphere of influence that was not so omnipresent as the urban experience, but not so removed as the remote rural hinterlands of many colonies' (2007: 181).

configurations of networks and regions had great impacts upon peoples' mental landscapes and choices of action. They were the contexts in which people redefined gender, ethnic, racial, and other relations and identities, while influenced by larger global forces.

Post-Colonial Era

In spatial terms, there was a long transition from the colonial to the post colonial era, just as in the earlier transition. Certain colonial-era spatial patterns continue on to the present, most notably, perhaps, in the legacy of apartheid segregation. On the other hand, wrenching political changes occurred at the time of independence and over succeeding decades. Just as capitalism had promoted radical spatial transformations in earlier periods, falling global prices and other forces brought deindustrialization and agricultural decline in many areas. Because of shrunken national revenues and pressure from the IMF and World Bank, formal sector jobs declined greatly in absolute and relative importance, while the informal sector expanded massively, especially from the 1980s.

Governments have ranged from plural democracies to harshly oppressive military dictatorships to the non-existent. Just as in the era of the slave trade, the trauma of war has been concentrated in time and place. Large numbers have died (perhaps 5 million in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to date), or been forced out of their homes into refugee camps and urban areas. The incidence of rape and other crimes against individuals' bodies has been high. Global economic forces—especially demand for minerals—and regional rivalries have driven violence. Through international criminal networks, warlords have gained weapons and imported commodities to hold followers. People resisting or escaping fighting and refugees have redesigned their social existence and the meaning of nation by creating new cultural practices in camps and by forging links to Europe and North America.

Materially, socially, perceptually, and morally, people have produced urban centers at all scales. Through daily cooperation and confrontation and by dramas and events-in-places, authorities, power holders, and "ordinary" residents have constituted and contested the meaning of public spheres (Howard 2003a: 201–203ff.). They have created countless new places since independence, perhaps especially in the

religious realm. Touba, the headquarters city of the Muridiyya Islamic order, grew from under 20,000 in 1973 to over 300,000 by the end of the century. Its beautiful mosque—a pilgrimage site housing the tomb of the founding saint Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba—represents the order to the world. The city is complexly organized into compounds and quarters headed by Bamba's sons or their descendants and districts formed by *daira*, associations built out of networks focused on marabout (Ross 1995: 220–225; Gueye 2001).⁷ In many Muslim areas, clashes over beliefs and practices have focused on particular sites and on women's bodies, often in the context of ideas flowing transnationally (B. Cooper 2003; Babou 2007). In small towns and rural areas, as well as cities, women and men have redefined Christian missionary churches and created many independent churches. They have given buildings and services more indigenous meanings through incorporation of local symbols, imagery, dance, and song, '...creating vibrant spaces of fellowship, community, prayer, and worship' (Hodgson 2005:181ff.). Pentecostal and charismatic churches, like Islamic movements, have proliferated, in part because of the incapacity of governments to provide services (Meyer 1998). On the other hand, given the jealousies and fears connected with competition and insecurity over personal relationships, jobs, and wealth in an era of globalization, people have turned to anti-witchcraft shrines for protection and assistance (Parish 2003). Older deities also continue to offer solace and aid (Allman and Parker 2005).

Massive urban settlements, numbering a million or more, such as Mushin (Lagos), Mathare (Nairobi), Pikine (Dakar), and Soweto (Johannesburg), have been shaped through politics and culture. A feature of Mushin that may be typical of such cities: client networks bind junior residents to senior, wealthier, property-owners, some of them leading political figures linked to regional and national officials (Barnes 1986: 67–69, 95–96ff.). Simone has described the efforts of residents to make things happen in Pikine, where marabouts share authority with the leaders of women's and youth organizations, development associations, and occupational groups. Marabouts link promising youth with external networks that may provide income and other opportuni-

⁷ As Gueye puts it, the human resources devoted by 'chemists, physicians, engineers, administrators, communication experts...' and other members to the Hizbut Tarkhiyya *daira* and its area of the city are incalculable (Gueye 2001: 121ff.).

ties. Associations compete to find funding outside their wards. 'Real local power largely rests with those who participate in or engineer networks of relations that cut across wards, municipalities, and other larger boundaries . . .,' and members must carefully assess alliances and continually seek new platforms of operation and partnerships (Simone 2004: 35–57). In most cities and town, people have forged new kinds of households and neighborhoods. In recent decades, with economies crumbling and pressure upon families growing, households have been the sites for redefining women's income responsibilities, notions of youth, and gender and generational relations (Grant 2003). Local neighborhoods remain important as sources identity, sometime ethnic, but often not. Through interaction in specific sites, urban dwellers give meaning to places and themselves (Konigs, Van Dijk and Foeken 2006).

City streets and amenities remain critical sites of contestation. Hawkers and traders have continued to struggle with urban and national authorities over access to and fees for using markets and streets in Nairobi, Kumase, and other cities (Robertson 1997; Clark 1994: 372–401). Increasingly, middle classes have sought to clear streets judged crowded, unsightly, or crime-ridden (Burton 2005: 278–281). In post-apartheid South Africa, conflicts have arisen over the supply and cost of electricity, water, shelter, and retroviral medication, meters, standpipes, and health centers have become flashpoints and symbols of the failures to achieve greater economic democracy despite millions of new housing units (Bond 2000). The HIV/AIDS epidemic has more recently given rise to places of suffering and mercy (Le Marcis 2004). Popular movements such as the Treatment Action Campaign have recruited 'large numbers of mostly youth and unemployed black women' and built advocacy networks around HIV/AIDS education and treatment (Robins and von Lieres 2004: 585).

Gender struggles and redefinitions have taken new forms in urban and rural sites (Sheldon 1996). Male and female traders of different scales have contested markets, and in some places men have pushed women into marginal commodities. Large corporations and parastatals have moved into women's spheres, while structural adjustment policies generally have harmed women traders and workers (Robertson 1990; Robertson 1997: 258–274; Sheldon 2002). Nonetheless, more than in the colonial era, women have been able to use access to places—including madrasas, schools, courts, formal work sites, and markets—to gain individual and group resources and to form networks

and associations. These in turn have enabled women to challenge patriarchal control, state cooptation of associations, and narrow definitions of nationality (Alidou 2005: 87–101; Hodgson 2001: 149–167; Tripp 1996). Governments have stigmatized sexualized bodies and sites. Many nationalist leaders were products of missionary schools that taught a strict heteronormativity and middle class patriarchal respectability. In Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF leaders—who launched attacks on gay and lesbian citizens and on homosexuality in general beginning in the mid 1980s and intensifying a decade later—were also influenced by the hyper-masculinity prevailing in guerrilla camps. Furthermore, Epprecht argues, gay-bashing in Zimbabwe coincided with popular dissatisfaction with the regime and responses to the rising HIV/AIDS epidemic. Many men felt their masculinity was threatened by loss of capacity to support families as the economy declined and as structural adjustment programs eliminated jobs and raised prices (Epprecht 2006: 169–183).

Colonial-era regional economic patterns continued on after independence, although many eventually fractured. Rural areas and small towns in Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and some other countries experienced prosperity, but also endemic uncertainty. Berry captured what may have been a widespread phenomenon in her description of western Nigeria. There cocoa farmers generated a new social landscape by allocating accumulated resources to housing, ceremonial life, and consumption that enhanced their seniority, but also promoted their children's educations and shift into the tertiary sector (Berry 1985). From the 1970s, such regions and strategies were undercut as global commodity prices fell. In a different sector with some parallels, mining gave rise to regions with growing prosperity in the early national era, followed by disastrous decline. On the copper belt of Zambia (and in other mineral zones), solid wages gave rise to a large working class and a zone of urban and periurban prosperity marked by improved health and longevity, more stable marriages, children's education, and patterns of consumption that miners equated with modernity. When copper prices declined, the region experienced a precipitous fall in quality of life indicators. Many residents reached a state of existence and mind that Ferguson typifies as "abject" (Ferguson 1999). More recently, global commodity prices have risen and fallen again, and it remains uncertain if such places that are dependent on extraction will revive. The mining of diamonds and other valuable minerals have in Sierra Leone and elsewhere given rise to boom towns and new regions, and

have channeled wealth into the hands of corrupt politicians, warlords, and illicit international dealers. The Niger Delta perhaps more than any other region symbolized the paradoxes of resource-based “development”: vast oil riches being generated in the midst of poverty and environmental destruction. Not surprising such regions have become epicenters of violent clashes among local networks, national governments, and international corporations (Okonta and Douglas 2003).

In elections and competitions over resources, politicians have mobilized religious and regional allegiances as much as ethnic sentiments, thereby often linking cities with periurban and rural areas. Such actions divided cities and regions along lines of identity and loyalty as manifested through voting, party membership, and violent clashes (Falola 2000). In some instances, leaders drew upon ancient pre-colonial shrines and fonts of supernatural power and upon sites of anti-colonial resistance or messianic or revivalist movements (Bernault 2000; Ranger 1999: 195–290). The “invention” of ethnically based regional identity has had its limits, however, particularly it would seem when people find it difficult to imagine a regional landscape and advocates cannot match visions with spatial realities (Nugent 2002: 201–230; Spear 2003).

One of the most distinctive characteristics of post-1960 Africa has been the way temporary and permanent migrants have created international networks. Intra-African networks often continued colonial-era patterns, notably the flow of agricultural workers in West Africa and mine workers in southern Africa. Such patterns, however, were altered by the decline of prices for primary products in the 1980s, newer employment attractions, and to some degree ethnic antagonisms (Bakewell and de Hass 2007). Trans-national networks formed by refugees, students and people trafficking in clothing, food, illegal drugs, and other commodities have multiplied. While students went abroad in earlier periods, the current numbers and range of target countries are without parallel. International networks have generated a significant flow of information, money, and new cultural practices, as vividly manifested in *La Sape*, a culture of elegant clothing and innovative life styles that youth originated in Brazzaville and elaborated in circuits involving that city, Kinshasa, and Paris. Particular cafes, boulevards, and arrondissement have become renowned for displays and challenges, and have acquired special cultural meanings (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000:138–142ff.; Gondola 1999).

Cultural re-mixing has typified large cities. South African cities, Johannesburg above all, have seen the “X generation,” that threw itself at great cost into the anti-apartheid struggle, succeeded by the “Y generation” marked by distinctive clothing and other cultural practices. The style-setting site has been a radio station that carries widely heard music and is credited with giving rise to a new urban sound, *kwaito* (Nuttall 2004). Perhaps the most widely circulated African music is that of the late Nigerian star, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, who has been portrayed in myriad images during and after his life (Schoonmaker 2003). Fela’s Kalakuta Compound in Lagos—with its shrine to the *orisha* and musical performance stage—may more than any other single site have condensed and revealed the complexly intertwined struggles over gender, sexuality, class, race, religion, and nation found in post-colonial Africa (Veal 2000).

The demographics of space profoundly contour people’s options. The massive growth of cities and multiplication of towns has no precedent in their impact upon people’s bodies and life choices, and upon other spatial processes. For the last several decades, people have been proliferating sites of residence, work, social and cultural life, and meaning in urban agglomerations and in the arteries and cross-roads between centers. Many, though by no means all, of the largest cities are capitals, and often on the coast, which shows the weight of colonial and global forces. Intra-urban, rural-urban, and international networks proliferate, which in part is an index of the further weakening and tensions within kin-based households and in part a reflection of people’s search after connections of all types that bring resources. Ideas move in such circuits, but also in ways not previously possible because of mass media. Flows of all types have given shape to new inter-active regions, while not necessarily diminishing the older ones, at least where a living can be made.

Conclusion

Over the last several centuries, fundamental spatial changes have occurred in Africa. In different ways in each period, external forces, the power of states and authorities, and ordinary people’s social investments and discourse structured actors’ spatial possibilities and mental landscapes, but not in determinist ways (Pred 1990). While people have been subject to capitalist demand for enslaved labor and commodities,

the spread of world religions, and colonialism—they have acted out spatial history at the level of local places, regions, and networks of various scales. Religious and political authorities marked bodies in new ways but have met resistance and counter understandings. People have de-sacralized or neglected many indigenous shrines, while sustaining others and building countless prayer grounds, mosques, and churches. People also have created new cultural practices in sites throughout Africa and by exchanges within and beyond the continent. Sites for wage and salaried employment and for informal work have appeared everywhere. Men and women, youth and elders, rich and poor have redefined gender, sexuality, generational, ethnic, racial, and class relations and identities by contesting the uses and meanings of places. Whereas in the pre-colonial past, traders, Muslim clerics, war leaders, and other specialists created territorially extensive networks, in recent generations millions of Africans have participated in far-reaching connections, even while continuing to form dense, local meshes. Farmers and urban dwellers have refashioned regions by organizing or defending against the slave trade, converting vast acreage into cash crop production, and creating migratory circuits along which goods and ideas have flowed. In recent decades, a global downturn in commodity prices, coupled with structural adjustment programs and neo-liberal policies, war, disease, and other forces have brought widespread impoverishment, widening divisions, and rapidly growing towns and cities, where most residents face extremely difficult situations and governments lack the means or will to provide sufficient services (Myers and Murray 2006). Within such constraints, Africans continue to contest, order, and give meaning to places; to think reflexively and strategically; to mobilize networks and associations for gain; to shape cities and regions, and to engage sites across and beyond the continent (Simone 2004; de Bruijn, van Dijk and Gewald 2007). People's access to enabling resources continues to differ greatly along lines of gender, age, status, class, and spatial location.

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STATE, REGION AND SPACE IN AFRICA

Fredrik Söderbaum and Ian Taylor

Introduction

Dynamic regionalist processes are globally unfolding, not least the formation of micro-regions. Though the formation of micro-regions is by no means a new phenomenon, in the context of globalisation and regionalisation, they are increasingly often cross-border in nature rather than contained within the boundaries of a particular nation-state (the standard conception of a micro-region). Notably, micro-regions exist between the “national” and the “local” level, and they are distinguishable from macro-regions (“world regions”), which are larger territorial units or sub-systems, between the “state” and the “global” level. There are many examples of such cross-border micro-regions, for instance, the Euroregions in Europe, the “Tex-Mex” cross-border region in North America, and the growth triangles in Southeast Asia, to mention a few (Breslin and Hook 2002; Perkmann and Sum 2002).

Africa is no exception to this global phenomenon; the African continent is filled with a multitude of cross-border micro-regions. This situation is due to, among other things, the permeability of formal national borders and the “surface nature” of most nation-state projects on the continent. We have noted in previous work on the subject that projects known as Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) and development corridors have emerged as the most distinct form of policy-driven micro-regionalism in eastern and southern Africa (Söderbaum and Taylor 2003). This chapter seeks to move such analysis forward by using a greater sample of African micro-regions, in order to reflect on states, regions and the respacing of Africa. In so doing, we draw conclusions from our recent book entitled *Afro-regions: the dynamics of cross-border micro-regionalism in Africa* (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008a), which includes a wide selection of cross-border micro-regions from all over Africa, such as the Maputo Development Corridor, the Zambezi Valley region, the Zambia-Malawi-Mozambique Growth Triangle, the Parrott’s Beak in the Sierra Leone-Liberia border zone as

well as a series of other micro-regions in the Great Lakes Region, east Africa as well as north Africa.¹

What is evident is the fact that the nascent micro-regions in Africa are both formal *and* informal, and often both at the same time, with deep implications for the respacing and rescaling of Africa. The informalisation of politics on the continent inevitably impacts upon the type and varieties of regionalism and regionalisation in Africa. Indeed, the nature of personal rule in Africa has often been to erode any sense of broad public accountability in favour of narrow privatised networks of influence and an informalisation of politics (Hydén 2000). In order for us to correctly contextualise regionalising tendencies in Africa, it is necessary to critically weigh up how state-society complexes and the diverse governance modalities on the continent influence and shape the formation of micro-regions in Africa. Certainly, given the nature of the state in post-colonial Africa the informalisation of politics has produced profoundly interesting forms of regionalisation on the continent. In short, in a considerable number of spaces in Africa, borders either essentially do not exist in the Westphalian sense—being ignored by actors such as local populations and refugees—or, they are strategically used by (often self-styled) representatives of the state to extract resources and rents. In either case, the notion of fixed boundaries and bordered delineations has little purchase in whole swathes of Africa.

Our analysis also explicitly recognises that in Africa there does not exist a tidy separation between the state (in all its myriad forms) and broader society. Just as individuals straddle this conceptual divide on a day-to-day basis, when talking of regionalisation in Africa it is apparent that processes straddle both the formal and informal (which in all practical purposes merge together). All such processes however impact upon social relations and the day-to-day lives of Africans, as well as having far-reaching implications for regionalisation and the sense of community within the various micro-regions.

Furthermore, what occurs at the micro-regional level is invariably reflective of what is happening at higher levels, or “scales” or “spaces”. In other words, micro-regional processes are not only about micro-regions but also reflect greater processes at the macro-level, but which

¹ The chapter draws mainly on ‘Considering Micro-regionalism in Africa in the Twenty-first Century’, in Söderbaum and Taylor (2008a).

can be perhaps easier seen at the micro-level. In this we argue that there is great heuristic value in studying micro-regions, in order to gain meaningful insights into regionalising processes across the continent at higher scales, as well as providing good insights into the ways in which governance modalities work within Africa. In short, micro-regions act as a microcosm and an entry point to the study of both regionalism and politics in Africa in the context of globalisation.

Although there exists a variety of studies on regionalism in Africa, the majority of such research focuses on macro-regions and inter-state formal frameworks, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU) and so forth. Much of this work is decidedly state-centric and in general somewhat ignorant of what is actually “happening”, in favour of often optimistic and unrealistic accounts about what state actors say they are going to do to build regions. In fact, there are too many studies based on the rhetorical commitments of regionalism in Africa, which—we would suggest—have little to do with the reality of regionalisation on the continent today, other than exposing the profound gap between stated commitments and actual practice.

In response, we favour an approach that looks at African regions *as they actually are*, and how they are *really* being constructed. In doing so, we follow Chabal and Daloz’s (1999) claims to look at Africa as it really is, rather than how pre-conceived ideas might portray it or how elite actors would have us believe how it is. This is important within the context of regional studies, given the inherently Western origins and genesis of most prior “mainstream” investigations, whereby regionalism in Africa continues to be assessed in relation to the European example. Indeed, we would argue that the manner by which African political structures operate—and by extension, how regionalisation in Africa proceeds—needs to be explored and scrutinised at face value, rather than as a degenerated example of what happens when states “go bad”, as it were. It is surely axiomatic that we are now in the fourth decade of African independence and it is somewhat naïve to think that the modern, Westphalian and Weberian state is somehow going to emerge in many parts of Africa. Similarly, this has immense implications for any study of regionalising processes in Africa that seeks to apply lessons from Europe into and onto the continent. No, any

serious analysis of micro-regions in Africa needs to scrutinise and try and make sense of the ways in which Africans encounter (and shape) regional dynamics and how various forces, be they based on ethnicity, gender, identity or occupation, influence Africa's encounter with the spatial logice of regionalism.

Within the regionalist literature, even that of the new regionalism, there remain very few case studies on how such regionalisms are affecting people "on the ground" and within specified micro-regional contexts in Africa (for exceptions see Grant and Söderbaum 2003; Söderbaum and Taylor 2003). This neglect is unfortunate, since micro-regionalism is perhaps the form of regionalism most beholden to "real" "African" processes but also reflects in detail some of the processes occurring at higher levels, scales and spaces. In this sense, Afro-regions are most obviously constructed at the interface between the top-down and the bottom-up; where state and society straddle each other. Top-down activities often merely grant states legitimacy (even if this is very limited) over processes that have long-existed. All too frequently, such involvement by the state can also actually be predatory and negative. There is a need to explore the interface between elite-derived agendas and popular reactions to such processes; between the formal and the informal; and whether this analytical distinction holds much water within the micro-regions. By now, it should be clear that we believe it does not.²

The analysis in this chapter is organized as follows. The next section considers the debate on regionalism in Africa and shows that our analysis springs from those works that try to understand the making and unmaking of regions and regional spaces. In the following two sections we integrate concepts and research culled from the Africanist literature regarding the essential conceptual tool of neopatrimonialism

² There are different ways to define formal and informal processes. The former refers often to official policies and codified interactions, which are often backed by written texts, legal treaties or constitutions. Informal processes are non-codified series of events based upon mutual understandings and accommodations, and tacit agreements. The informal aspects of regionalism is underresearched in the field as a whole. The particular importance of informal regionalism in the African context relates to the fact that it is undisputed that many parts of Africa are characterised by myriads of informal and non-institutional interactions and activities between a mosaic of informal workers and self-employed agents, families, business networks, petty traders, migrant labour, refugees and so forth. In fact, the size of the informal economy in Africa relative to the formal economy is the highest in the world.

(section 3) and the power of neoliberalism in Africa (section 4). Thereafter, we move on to show how neopatrimonialism and neoliberalism interact in the composition and construction of Afro-regional spaces, *inter alia* using the Maputo Development Corridor (MDC) as a concrete case. Sixth, we pinpoint what micro-regions on the continent tell us about the spatial logic of Africa.

Debates about regions and regionalism in Africa

There is a vivid academic debate about regionalism in Africa. Two different but nevertheless partly overlapping schools of thought dominate both the academic debate and policy discussions. A third, radically different perspective, receives much less attention both in the scholarly debate and above all in policy circles.

The first perspective is mainly associated with institutionalist and liberal lines of thought, concentrating on formal inter-state frameworks and/or official trade and investment flows, commonly with reference to Europe as a comparative marker or model (Fourtuan 1993; Holden 2001; Jenkins and Thomas 2001). According to this line of thought, the European experience suggests a universal potential of regionalism, and that regionalism in Africa can be an important instrument in the achievement of peace, security and development. According to this school of thought, the “problem” for the continent is that state-led regionalism in Africa is weak, and to a large extent has even failed. This is a consequence of the weakness of African states/economies and the failure of African governments to transfer sovereignty, engage in meaningful collective action and build up the capacities and institutions of regional organisations.

In our view this approach needs to be challenged for a number of reasons. One weakness is that the positivistic logic of investigation results in a concern with the methodology of regionalism rather than a systematic concern for the socio-economic circumstances and historical context in which regions and regionalism occur. This weakness is closely related to the fact that these theories are developed first and foremost for the study of Europe. When this geographic focus is transcended, the main focus is placed on North America and the Asia-Pacific. Even in such “developed” regionalisms, variations from the “norm” are explained in terms of how they differ from the “standard case” of Europe (Mattli 1999). The problem lies, generally speaking,

in that the same underlying assumptions and conceptualisations that stem from a particular reading of European integration—such as the notion of unitary states, the regulating influence of regional organisations, trade and policy-led economic integration, the notion of the rational-bureaucratic state with regulated modalities of governance and so on—influence the description *and prescription* of regionalism in the rest of the world.

The second perspective receiving much attention in the debate can be referred to as the “pan-African” school of thought. It somewhat idealistically claims that African unity can overcome the balkanisation and economic underdevelopment that plagues the continent and which was a pernicious residue of colonialism. Within this approach, there is a strong emphasis on the strengthening of pan-African regional organisations and the regional economic communities (RECs) of the envisioned African Economic Community (AEC) (Asante 1997; Muchie 2003). The strong emphasis in the past on de-linking and collective self-reliance has now been replaced by a vision that stresses that African unity and cooperation is needed in order to make globalisation beneficial for Africa.

It is noteworthy that the pan-African line of thought, similarly to liberal and institutionalist perspective, often takes the European experience as an inspiration and as a justification for the development of pan-African regional organisations and institutions. Indeed, despite their foundational differences (especially regarding the reasons for the lack of success and implementation hitherto), the two strands of thought come to similar conclusions, namely that successful regionalism in Africa is heavily dependent on strong and functional regional organisations and institutions. The EU undoubtedly serves as an important source of inspiration, or a model, even if liberals often emphasize the role of market and trade integration coupled with functional cooperation, whilst pan-Africanists give more attention to development-enhancing measures, solidarity, and the need for political intervention in order to ensure economic restructuring.

A third and smaller group of scholars is more skeptical about whether the restructured regional organisations will be able to attain their goals of highly developed institutional frameworks—nearly always modeled on the EU—with attendant economic and political integration. The skepticism of this group has generated a radically different interpretation of regionalism in Africa, which transcends the narrow focus on

inter-state regional frameworks, and obviates the artificial separation, in the African context, of state and non-state actors, that are associated with traditional regional approaches (Bach 1999; Bøås et al. 2005; Grant and Söderbaum 2003; Hentz and Bøås 2003; Taylor 2003a; Söderbaum 2004).

This is by no means a homogeneous school of thought, but refers to a diverse group of relatively like-minded scholars who share important common denominators and interact in overlapping networks of research. The New Regionalism Approach (NRA) is perhaps the most debated perspectives within this broader school. The NRA is best understood within the broader tradition of critical and reflectivist International Political Economy (IPE), resulting in an ambition to transcend and challenge “problem-solving” mainstream theories (Murphy and Tooze 1991; Hettne 1995; Cox 1996). This has two important theoretical and methodological consequences as far as the study of regions and regionalism is concerned. The first is associated with the way regions and regional space are studied and conceptualised, and the other is with the unpacking of the state-society complex and considering formal-informal nexuses.

With regard to the first of these aspects, many disciplines and discourses have maintained a strong emphasis on “territory” and “rule” in the study of both micro-regions and macro-regions. Often, especially in Political Science and Economics, both macro-regions and micro-regions have been taken as pre-givens, defined in advance of research, and often simply been seen as particular inter-state or policy-driven frameworks. Integral to this reasoning is that regions are believed to exist “out there”, identifiable through material structures, regional organisations and regional actors, resulting in space-as-container schemas. This is then closely associated with the attention devoted to determine what types of regions are the most functional, instrumental and efficient “to rule”. Any class, ethnic, religious, gender etc dimensions of such spatial-legalism is rarely unpacked or even considered.

The reflectivist perspective built upon in this study is different; it conceives regions as social constructions. We adopt a more nuanced and multiscalar conceptualisation of space compared to mainstream theories (Jessop 2003; Niemann 2000; Söderbaum 2004). We contend that there has been a systematic exclusion of spatial analysis from the debate in mainstream regionalism theory. In fact, we argue that there is a deep-seated theoretical inability in the dominant frameworks

in International Relations in general to come to grips with social phenomena, which cannot be represented solely through national scale and state-centric analyses (Niemann 2000: 4–5). Yet when this assumed national scale/space is problematised, other scales and spaces automatically receive more recognition. Indeed, a richer and more nuanced conception of context and space sees the state's territory as only one of a number of different geographical scales (Agnew 1998: 2). In Jessop's (2003: 182) language 'there is a proliferation of discursively constituted and institutionally materialised and embedded spatial scales... that are related in increasingly complex tangled hierarchies rather than being simply nested one with the other, with different temporalities as well as spatialities'. From such a perspective, there is no pre-given set of spaces and scales; instead new spaces emerge or existing ones gain in "thickness". Different scales of action are linked in a variety of complex ways, implying that there is a complex set of actors (state and non-state) who are embedded in different policy scales, which in turn blurs the distinction between the international and the domestic (also see Perkmann and Sum 2001).

As a result, in our framework regions cannot be taken for granted: they are *not* seen as "natural", organic, essential or material objects. Instead, regions are considered to be dynamic settings for social interaction, with particular focus placed on the process through which they are "becoming" and the way they are constructed/reconstructed by reflective actors (Söderbaum 2004). Due to the fact that there are no "natural" regions, they are, at least potentially, heterogeneous with unclear spatial delimitations.

From the point of view of the NRA, the puzzle is to understand and explain the process through which regions are coming into existence and are being consolidated—their "becoming" so to speak (through regionalization)—rather than a particular set of activities and flows within a pre-given, and often pre-scientific regional spatial or regional framework. As Neumann (2003:161) points out, '[t]he existence of regions is preceded by the existence of region-builders.' Following Neumann (2003: 162), we need to ask questions about 'how and why the existence of a given region was postulated in the first place, who perpetuates its existence with what intentions, and how students of regions, by including and excluding certain areas and peoples from a given region, are putting their knowledge at the service of its perpetuation or transformation'.

A second characteristic of the NRA is related to a problematisation of the state-society complex and the relationships between the formal and informal. The NRA is founded on the necessity to “unpack” the nature of the state, avoiding the Western-centric conceptions of the state inherent in mainstream theorising in the field—be it neorealism, institutionalism or regional economic integration theory. In doing so, the NRA critically assesses state-society complexes in the formation of regions and opens up potential for a broad and deep interdisciplinary, critical and reflectivist understanding of what characterises regionalism and regionalisation.

An important empirical observation in Africa from the viewpoint of the NRA is that many ruling regimes and political leaders in Africa engage in symbolic and discursive activities—praising the goals of regionalism and regional organisations, signing cooperation treaties and agreements, and taking part in “summitry regionalism”—while remaining uncommitted to, or unwilling to implement, jointly agreed policies. Regionalism is thus used as a discursive and image-boosting exercise: leaders demonstrate support and loyalty towards one another in order to raise the status, image and formal sovereignty of their often-authoritarian regimes, both domestically and internationally (Bøås 2003; Clapham 1996). Hence, there is a fundamental difference between the interests of the ruling political regime and the broader so-called “national interest”, a distinction seldom made in mainstream analysis.

This type of “regime-boosting” or “sovereignty-enhancing” regionalism may be a goal in itself, but it may also be closely related to “shadow regionalisation”; what Bach refers to as “trans-state regionalisation” (Bach 1999, 2005). Shadow regionalisation draws attention to the potential for public officials and various actors within the state to be entrenched in informal market activities in order to promote either their political goals or their private economic interests. This particular type of regionalisation grows from below and is built upon rent seeking or the stimulation of patron-client relationships. Bach claims, for instance, that regional organisations constitute a means for “resource capture” and international patronage (Bach 2005). It implies (informal) regionalisation without formal regional integration.

Until recently the NRA and likeminded scholars have focused mainly on macro-regional processes. This chapter uses the NRA approach to study micro-regional developments on the continent. The purchase the NRA grants to studying the nexus between the

informal and formal processes associated with regionalisation in Africa is particularly interesting. It is this important phenomenon that we turn to next.

*Linking the Formal and the Informal: The Regionalisation
of Neopatrimonialism*

The NRA seeks to transcend the conventional obsession with states as actors and the undue emphasis on formal regionalism and inter-governmental regional organisations. It also seeks to bridge the divide between formal and informal regionalisation, considering the connections between them. This perspective is highly relevant in the African context. Despite the recent fanfare surrounding the transformation of the OAU to the AU, many seasoned commentators are pessimistic that the new entity will be able to attain its vaunted goals of a highly developed institutional framework (modeled on the EU no less). The largely dismal track record of other regional African ventures, such as ECOWAS and COMESA and, to a lesser extent, SADC, only contributes to a general lack of confidence in formal state-led regionalisation in Africa. In contrast, when we witness the more informal processes of regionalisation, ranging from “shadow regionalisation”, illicit trade networks in blood diamonds and other commodities, to grey markets in terms of arms sales, nascent regional trade corridors, regional conflicts, cross-border trading and migration, the “real” nature of African regionalisation is veritably full of vitality and energy.

Indeed, there is certainly micro-regionalism in Africa beyond formalized inter-state action. States are not the only—nor indeed primary—regionalising actors, and markets, civil societies, as well as external actors, are deeply involved in processes of regionalisation on the continent. In the context of studies on regionalism in Africa, we believe that the NRA needs to be married to some analytical tools found usually within the literature on contemporary Africa. In particular, we believe that an analysis that blends elements of the NRA with understandings of how neopatrimonial systems operate provides a good grounding for understanding how Africa’s regions “work”.

Importantly, as we have already noted, political power in Africa is often informalised. Indeed, state power within Africa is less about administration over the state and its attendant geographic area, with all the implications this might have regarding the provision of services

to the populace, and more about the running of a relatively limited (in geographic terms and economic embeddedness) set of resources that are the sources of revenue and the foundations for entrenching power through patronage. In short, 'The struggle for power [is] so absorbing that everything else, including development, [is] marginalised' (Ake 1991: 7). Indeed:

To secure political incumbency, public benefits [are] distributed and opportunities to profit provided along political lines. Thus in their quest for self-preservation, state elites...[dispense] government-controlled resources—jobs, licenses, contracts, credits—to select political allies as well as mediating access to economic opportunities in favour of close associates so as to enhance their hold over state power (Tangri 1999: 10).

Crucially, resources extracted from the state or the economy are deployed as the means to maintain support and legitimacy in this system, with the concomitant effect that the control of the state is equivalent to the control of resources which in turn is crucial for remaining a Big Man. Control of the state serves the twin purposes of lubricating the patronage networks and satisfying the selfish desire of elites to self-enrich themselves, in many cases, in a quite spectacular fashion. In this light, the insights from the NRA that regionalism is more complex (and sometimes also more detrimental) than simply being an instrument to enhance an ambiguous "national interest" (realism) or the procurement of the "public good" or "trade" (liberalism) is crucial and helpful. Potentially, state actors create regionalisation in order to achieve private goals and promote particular (vested) interests rather than broader societal interests. As a result, regionalisation will not necessarily be harmonious or beneficial to all participants, contradicting the liberal assumptions about the inherent worthiness of commerce. On the contrary, regionalisation may well be exclusionary, exploitative, and also reinforce asymmetries and imbalances within society and within and across geographic spaces. In order to understand this it is vital to unpack and problematise the state and the state-society complex.

In talking about something as broad as "the African state", generalisations are necessary, and the applicability of such an overview to each individual African country is contingent. Having said that, it cannot be denied that a great deal of post-colonial African spaces, bounded by formal frontiers and with an international presence at various international institutions such as the United Nations, function quite differently from conventional understandings of what a formal Western

state is and should do. This is of course, not surprising, but in order for us to understand the politics of the state on the continent (and thus, the politics of micro-regions in Africa), the concept of neopatrimonialism has largely become the standard tool of analysis. If this is not recognised, analyses may be marked by a distinct naivety in evaluating the potentiality or otherwise of how regionalism in Africa may bring about change on the continent. Our critique of past analyses of regionalisation processes in Africa is in part based on the neglect of this fundamental modality of rule on the continent.

Because access to resources depends largely upon being inside the state apparatus, patrons reward supporters with sinecures in the government and nationalised industries—or in formal regional arrangements. Such bureaucracies have been ‘transformed into... patrimonial-type administrations in which staff [are] less agents of state policy (civil servants) than proprietors, distributors and even major consumers of the authority and resources of the government’ (Jackson and Rosberg 1994: 300). This is well understood and even accepted in many African countries. Indeed, the exercise of personalised exchange, clientelism and corruption is internalised into African politics (Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 63). This is ‘accepted as normal behaviour, condemned only in so far as it benefits someone else rather than oneself’ (Clapham 1985: 49).

Crucially, national or regional development and a broad-based productive economy is far less a concern (in fact, might stimulate opposition) to elites within such systems than the continuation of gainful utilisations of resources for the individual advantage of the ruler and his clientelistic networks. In other words, instead of investing in regional projects that promote broad-based development and a regional collective good, the ruling elites will much more likely seek to control what material benefits of state-sovereignty that they can muster in order to strengthen their own authority within a given political space, as well as personally benefit, often financially. This helps explain in part why a great deal of regional projects fail in Africa; they simply do not personally benefit the elites in charge (either within the logic of the neopatrimonial system or literally monetarily) and thus such rulers rapidly lose interest in promoting regional integration. What remains in such circumstances are often ad-hoc spatial arrangements, invariably financed by the donor community. These arrangements are then mediated by and through the attempt to externally encourage

reform. The influence of neoliberal thinking and globalising discourses on these formal regional projects is what we turn to next.

The Power of Neoliberalism in Africa

Since at least the early 1980s, important changes have occurred within the global economy that have formed the structural backdrop for the discussion about development and politics in Africa. The dominant modes of thought and action within the global economy, commonly described as neoliberal, have set the dominant parameters within which debates about Africa's future and how the major external powers interact with Africa. Virtually all aspects of expressed contemporary state policy have been heavily influenced by neoliberal discourses, including trade, aid, investment, good government and governance, development, state-building, crisis management and peacekeeping, and human rights. In short, neoliberalism has become the predominant ideology legitimating various policies (especially privatisation and deregulation) and delegitimising others (such as centralised provisions of basic welfare and increased public expenditure and taxation). The desire to develop high levels of social control thus lies at the heart of the neoliberal project.

The prevailing neoliberal discourse remains very much the dominant political and economic model for Africa as encouraged by the Western powers. This hegemonic discourse demands that the role of the state should be to "enable" the market, and economies must look outward towards the global market as a means to attract resources and investment. This neoliberal agenda is thus broadly built on at least two main elements: (i) the down-sizing of the role of the state in the economy in order to boost the private sector and spur competition; and (ii) to open up the African economies in order to integrate them into the global economy.

With regard to the first element, there is very strong emphasis on the prescription that the state needs to be deregulated and made more "efficient" in order to encourage private sector development. State intervention is, to a considerable extent, seen as a distortion, whereas the "market" is seen as the engine of growth and a much more efficient mechanism for resource allocation. According to this line of thinking, states are seen as ineffective and bureaucratic and therefore their role in the economy should be drastically reduced. The state and the public

should first and foremost ensure an enabling environment for the private sector. Good governance is thus defined as less government and getting the prices right (Thompson 2000: 45).

With regard to the second ingredient, although it is possible to talk of a “post-Washington consensus”, the dominant political and economic model demands that economies must look outward towards the global market as a means to attract resources and investment. This, so the discourse goes, is best achieved by “openness” through global and regional economic integration. In this light, state administrations must seek to construct and extend free trade areas, whilst at the same time opening up their own economies. The eventual goal is to respace Africa by consolidating and integrating existing free trade areas, whereby borders, protective measures and other obstacles to “free trade” become mere memories. This vision is the basis upon which both SADC and COMESA are currently predicated upon, however far away into the future the realisation of such objectives may be. Eventually, such giant free trade areas will constitute “stepping stones” towards a global multilateral free trade utopia.

Other forms of open regionalism can be understood in the same vein. For instance, the spatial development initiatives (SDIs) are intended to bring globalisation to southern Africa at the same time as they are designed to enhance (open) economic integration within and across the region. In this way there is no competition, but rather an anticipated synergy and close association between globalisation, as well as various forms of market-oriented forms of regionalisms at various scales (Söderbaum 2004).

Neoliberal regionalism should be understood as a distinctive “project”, with a highly political content, fashioned and pursued by identifiable actors, institutions and interests. The project is shared and reinforced by a wide range of politicians and policy-makers, think-tanks and researchers, businesses and corporations, private sector alliances and other agents, from within the regions but also by a variety of external actors, above all the international financial institutions (IFIs), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and also the EU. The NRA seeks to detect and reveal the power relations driving these grand processes aimed at respacing, and for whom and for what purpose such regionalisms are being promoted. One of the core problems in this regard is that ‘most discussions on globalisation and “development” take for granted the benefits of export orientation and more trade, wondering

only if more or less, and what kind of state activity facilitates a positive insertion in the global political economy' (Moore 1999: 80).

Partial Reform/Partial Regionalisation?

What is interesting about the above is that both neopatrimonialism and neoliberalism coalesce together in divergent ways to shape and influence the regionalising processes within Africa, dependent upon the history and balance of forces within particular states and regions. As a result, the regionalist projects take on very different shapes and trajectories and are an intriguing hybrid, unrecognisable to most conventional analyses of regionalism. In places where neoliberal reforms are implemented, most notably in southern Africa, the state "shrinks" both spatially in reach and sociologically in depth. Paradoxically, in these circumstances, liberalisation may actually coincide with and/or facilitate a slide away from formal regionalism, as this stimulates the informalisation of regionalism *and* promotes more flexible and private-led mechanisms to tie into neoliberalism, such as SDIs. But we also see the informalisation of regionalism in order to promote neopatrimonial regionalism and the privatisation of regionalism, in order to sustain clientelism. This is because those engaged in the types of pathological neopatrimonialism as seen in parts of Africa may seek to reduce the provision of public goods as a means to abet a clientelistic culture of dependency in order to consummate business. This is typically centred around personalised networks and access to well-connected elites, rather than through "normal" public service channels, which have been looted of any resources anyway. Thus both the capacity to administer and advance regional integration projects at the formal and institutional level *and the rationale* are undermined, to be replaced in many cases by the informal and illegal.

Certainly, from the perspective of the elites pursuing some form of formal regionalism does not make sense as they are not interested in some regional public good or general advancement. Furthermore, committing themselves to a formal regional pact may actually lead to inhibiting factors (norms, sanctions, even military interference from fellow member states) that could threaten the continuation of their activities. The neoliberal ingredients of globalisation may well then actually legitimise the peeling away of the state, whilst at the

same time helping to lay the foundations for decay and clandestinity as well as other forms of informal regionalism.

Equally however, the liberalisation message being advanced by the West does not actually undermine the politics of patronage that continues to underpin most policy decisions made in Africa. Certainly, empirical evidence has suggested that the message of liberalisation has not set “free” the market from political interference but has rather stimulated a useful injection of political and economic resources that has the danger of perpetuating—if not entrenching—patrimonial politics on the continent. This is more so when the “governance” strictures about regional arrangements lags behind—and is often subsumed—by the liberalisation and privatisation half of the agenda. Indeed, the confusion and obfuscation about what governance means, has meant that both external and internal elite actors have allowed the term to become synonymous with regional “open markets”. Whilst this grants a privileged position to international investors and their local partners, the foundations of patrimonial politics are likely to remain secure as state elites have, over the last twenty years or so, shown a remarkable adeptness in shaping and benefiting from what liberalisation that is allowed to take place (Clapham 1996: 173–181; King 2003). Besides, it is necessary to be cautious regarding the scale of privatisation that has actually occurred as there has been an intriguing “taming of structural adjustment” (Chabal and Daloz 1999) across the continent. In other words, African elites have been successful in not only resisting wholesale privatisation but also liberalisation if and when it undermines their political positions. This of course all makes perfect sense if we are to understand that economic policies and decision-making in Africa is, on the main, based on the need to distribute resources to furnish clientelistic networks.

Certainly, the interests of the ruling elites systematically diverges from the broader idea of raising the general well-being of the populace *or* advancing some grand regionalist project. This has been shown time and time again in what has been termed the “partial reform syndrome” where symbolic gestures, rhetorical commitments and promises of change mask and further lubricate the diffusion of largesse and patronage (Van de Walle 2001). But even where the state does privatise, ‘African states have retained significant minority equity stakes in the few infrastructure privatisations they have concluded, holding back from the market an average of one third of the shares’ (*ibid.*).

What is avoided however, by hook or by crook, is structural reform and policies aimed at broad-based development.

Partial reform neatly allows the elites to demonstrate their liberalising credentials to the donor community, by permitting limited privatisation, but at the same time grants the same actors access to a continued flow of resources in the shape of shares and dividends that are likely to accrue from the improved efficiency of now-privatised enterprises. And the fact that a good deal of former state-owned companies are bought up by foreign concerns means that there is limited scope for the development of an independent, indigenous private sector through the privatisation schemes—a sector which African governments have been traditionally suspicious of anyway and where any nascent capitalist class has had to be more politically adept than it is economically (Leys 1996: 161–162). Partial reform has also allowed African elites to cast themselves as “responsible” partners and in doing so has stimulated increased flows of aid in order to support ongoing projects, such as “region-building”. So, in short we have mixed systems where in some cases neoliberal reforms have brought about change, whilst in other states this should not be exaggerated. The implications for regionalist projects supposedly based on liberalisation and “open borders” is that the formal is far more circumscribed and can be characterised as partial reform, if not partial regionalization—whilst the informal carries on as per usual. Making sense of this phenomenon is no easy matter. But it makes the study of micro-regionalism in Africa a fascinating topic of debate and analysis.

The case of the Maputo Development Corridor³

The MDC micro-region is an interesting mix of neoliberalism at the elite level infused within neopatrimonial structures of governance. Certainly, any study of Mozambique in particular will show that neoliberal reform has gone hand in hand with the entrenchment of clientelism, patronage and corruption. Simply put, clientelism and graft do not take place outside of neoliberal reforms or act as an aberration, but in the context of such reforms being grafted on neopatrimonial systems, are actually part and parcel of the reforms. This has profound implications

³ This section builds on F. Söderbaum and I. Taylor ‘Competing Region-building in the Maputo Development Corridor’, in Söderbaum and Taylor (2008a).

for how development is viewed as being best pursued by elites in both Mozambique and South Africa. This is particularly urgent when the MDC is seen as a model, even a flagship, for the rest of the region (Söderbaum and Taylor 2003). For instance, the Mombasa-based Transport Transit Corridor Authority (TTCA) has asserted that ‘The TTCA secretariat will rely on the experience in southern Africa, particularly the Maputo Development Corridor, in working towards the transformation of the Northern Corridor from a transport corridor into an economic development corridor’ (*The East African (Nairobi)* September 13, 2004). This has important implications for governance structures within these spaces, as well as implications for corruption levels.

Furthermore, the political context of the MDC has important implications for any micro-regionalism within the MDC. It is a fact that Mozambique’s “democratisation” and post-war rebuilding has been characterised by co-optation and a return to (or intensification of) patrimonial behaviour. Frelimo has energetically sought to centralise authority and has continually tried to co-opt oppositional forces, rather than merely deal with them in an authoritarian manner (Frelimo’s natural predilection). This has far more to do with image and the desire to project a good impression to donors, than it does with any intrinsic commitment to democracy. Those that succumb to such blandishments are incorporated into patrimonial structures and suitably rewarded. According to Lalá and Ostheimer (2003: 52–53) ‘National reconciliation is conditional and based on the interests of the hegemonic party. Such a situation [has] only secure[d] a temporary peace, characterised mainly by passive resistance within society’. Indeed:

While the initial phase of Mozambique’s transition (1990–1994) seemed to indicate that the country was on the path to democracy and democratic consolidation characterised by mutual respect between political actors, tolerance, dialogue and a climate of social trust, the years thereafter clearly highlighted the re-emergence of patrimonial structures and deeply rooted mistrust amongst political forces. Frelimo managed to dominate and steer Mozambique’s transition process. It did so in the beginning when it initiated an economic and political liberalisation process, and does so now. The entanglement of party and state, Frelimo’s patrimonial networks and the corrupt behaviour of the political elite, constitute severe obstacles for Mozambique’s progress towards consolidated democratic structures (*ibid.*).

Such impulses, it might be said, also constitute severe obstacles for the construction of any inclusive micro-regionalism along the MDC.

The broader macro-economic vision upon which the MDC is constructed is vitally important. The neoliberal forces behind the formal micro-region's inception can only push for further privatisation, which will inevitably—given the context in which they take place—lead to more corruption and clientelism. The donor community is clearly not bothered by this, as long as liberalisation continues apace and Mozambique can be still held up as a “success story” with fantastic growth rates (Söderbaum and Taylor 2001). Frelimo's elites quite happily go along with this charade, indeed personally profit from it as “The Mozambican elite have become skilled in giving the donors what they want—market-friendly policies, fiscal restraint, transparency, good accounting of donor money and obsequious praise of donor policies—rather than what they say they want, while at the same time creating ever larger spaces for predation and state capture” (Hanlon 2002: 41).

At the formal level, the MDC is designed for the purpose of crowding-in external capital in order to build industrial and infrastructural mega-projects and continue the myth of Mozambique as a neoliberal success story. It is driven by very select interests and the endogenous (and informal) capacities in the Maputo corridor are neglected. In fact, the MDC is designed as if there was no informal sector in existence.

But, it is important to emphasise that the MDC cannot simply be defined as a top-down project to reconfigure spatial areas along neoliberal lines: globalisation and regionalisation stimulates reactions involving the re-organisation and reterritorialisation of spaces in order to meet the challenges posed and suggests that agency in such “Afro-regions” is present throughout. Though existing regionalist projects such as the MDC reflect the impulses of a neoliberal world, space for contesting alternatives exists, with counter-reactions being continually generated and with competing notions of region-building in the corridor area: the migrant corridor, the informal trade corridor and the criminal corridor (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008b).

What all the above suggests is that the regionalism of the MDC is not only driven by state elites, who have their own agenda, but also by communities and peoples who utilise the micro-region for a heterogeneous set of reasons and motives: as made explicit in the making and un-making of the formal MDC project and a set of more informal and alternative regional strategies. These two sets of processes—the formal/top-down and the informal/bottom-up—frequently clash and are in confrontation at a multiple and quite complex set of levels. Such processes and outcomes of region-building and region-destruction, in

all their multiple activities and levels, characterise the micro-region and contribute to the respacing of the territory.

What Micro-regions Tell Us About Regions and Space in Africa

In the study of micro-regions in Africa, we discern a number of crucial insights that grant us interesting glimpses of how African social formations and economies operate.

Firstly, micro-regions represent the degrees of agency that Africans operationalise on a day-to-day basis within a spatial context. They can represent diverse strategies, which non-state players utilise to survive in a difficult world. Here we may talk of the ways in which diasporas, migrants and traders all utilise micro-regions and micro-regional spaces to live, even prosper (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008c). And in doing so, their agency makes use of space and indeed shapes the ways in which state and society straddle each other in Africa and the ways in which the private use of public resources is employed.

Secondly, when discussing micro-regions we need to ask who sets the agenda for such respacing? Answers to this will vary across the continent. Certainly whilst African's own agency plays a crucial role, the functions and involvement of other actors may at times be as important, if not more important. Thus an analysis of a micro-region in Africa (as elsewhere, arguably) has to integrate investigations into the agenda-setting behaviours of multi-national corporations, investors, diasporas, the local elites and—absolutely crucially given the current context which Africa finds itself—the donors. Indeed, there is at present a fad amongst some donors to promote regionalism as a spatial “solution” to Africa's problems. The classic example here might be seen to be the Swedish involvement in trying to create a region around Lake Victoria. This will invariably involve seeking to introduce agendas on the Lake that may not necessarily fit with existing patterns of life there, or with the dominant policy-frameworks, such as the East African Community (EAC). The issue of agenda-setting within micro-regions is an important ingredient to any comprehensive study of regionalising and respacing processes within Africa.

Thirdly, southern Africa remains the most developed in terms both of economic infrastructure and, crucially, formal institutions. This can in part be traced to the colonial legacy whereby investment was put into building up rational bureaucratic structures,

albeit ones based on racism and exploitation. The domination of the region by South Africa has perpetuated the *relative* institutional strength of region-building schemes in southern Africa. So, it can be said that the legacy of relative institutional potency has remained in southern Africa, which, in general, has avoided the type of intensive neopatrimonialism, if not 'pathological patrimonialism' (Ergas 1987) that exists elsewhere on the continent, Angola and Zimbabwe being the obvious exceptions. And conversely, the weakly institutionalised nature of the regional hegemon in western Africa viz. Nigeria, has important implications and effects on the formal structures of, and indeed nature of, region-building projects in that part of the continent.

What this means for the study of regionalism is that the formal institutional bases of formal region-building projects are strongest in the southern cone and generally weaker elsewhere, in some parts of the continent, spectacularly so in central and western Africa. As a result, the respacing processes of micro-regionalisation in southern Africa exhibit greater mixes between the formal and informal and in fact these two impulses compete for supremacy in quite intriguing ways. The dividing line between the two is of course blurred and in some parts of the region are subsumed wholly. Yet it cannot be denied that the formal institutional manifestations of official spatial projects are stronger in southern Africa than they are elsewhere, resulting in a fascinating milieu where policy-driven (formal) processes are mediated by the informal processes of neopatrimonialism, whilst in other parts of the continent the policy-driven formal element within many regionalists schemes is barely discernible other than on long-forgotten policy papers and treaties, leading to an almost instantaneous undermining of any real implementation of regional plans by most governments in such spaces. Obviously, rhetorical regionalism prevails also in southern Africa, as seen in discursive region-building in the Zambia-Malawi-Mozambique Growth-Triangle (ZMM-GT) (Slocum-Bradley 2008), but this is arguably rarer than in other parts of the continent.

Fourthly, in studying micro-regions we encounter the issue of spatial reach, that is, the local and global reach of micro-regions (Bach 2008). Where do they begin and more crucially, where do they end? In this age of globalisation we can truly talk of the transnationalisation of space, linking up to diasporas or to global trade networks, which make the micro-region actually global in certain dimensions. The notion of

hubs and spokes and trans-state spatial networks links to these notions. In short, a local anchor (i.e. the micro-region) does not mean that micro-regions are necessarily focused only on the local; they can be rather geared towards the global, with the neoliberal discourse of globalisation providing a rationale and explanation, as can be observed in the Maputo Development Corridor (MDC), Walvis Bay, the Zambezi Valley as well as the Zambezi Valley Spatial Development Initiative (ZVSDI) (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008c; Simon and Samé Ekobo 2008; Nuvunga 2008; Slocum-Bradley 2008). The diamond regions in West Africa and other more informal cross-border micro-regions in north Africa, east Africa and central Africa are similarly globally oriented (even if informally so) (Grant 2008; Clapham 2008; Lehtinen 2008; Bøås and Jennings 2008).

Finally, we can talk of the territorial spatial imprint of micro-regions. Units indeed replicate themselves; we can mention Nigeria's reincarnation at diverse levels from the national to the federal to the macro-regional or micro-regional. But the modalities stay the same, only that at the micro-region these are often in much sharper focus. At the same time we can contrast regionalism in Africa with those in Europe; in the former there is often the context of a lack of an overarching regulatory framework. So, Parrot's Beak in West Africa for instance operates at a quite different level and way from say, Flanders in Belgium. Equally, the inherent territorialism within regional studies, notwithstanding the increasing transnationalisation of many micro-regions, means that micro-regions can at certain levels and times be exclusive. In this sense, micro-regions and the parochialism inherent in some of them act against the pan-Africanist dream that still enervates the continent at times. In this sense, micro-regions can divide existing spatial entities rather than aggregating them within the broader context of a continental Africa. Yet at the same time and quite intriguingly, there may be cases where the opposite may occur and where cognitive notions of a region defy conventional territoriality. We here think of the pan-Somali vision. So, in many cases and circumstances, a micro-region may not have neat geographical-spatial confines but may have to include analyses of discursive practices and questions of identity that may transcend a more narrow definition. This is part and parcel of contemporary respacing via regionalisation in Africa.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide some general reflection about regions and space in Africa. In doing so, we assert the necessity of understanding the state in Africa and its logic and modalities of rule before one can analyse regionalisation on the continent. This allows one to situate studies on African regionalisms within the context of state-society relations. In this light, whilst individuals who have gained access to rents from the sort of enclave economies existent in Africa may benefit handsomely, the overall milieu fundamentally fails to promote economic growth and development and in actual fact, across the continent, tends to keep the continent's peoples down. As Clapham asserted, 'the use of power over other people for the purpose essentially of private gain is corrupt, not merely because it fails to correspond to formal rules of essentially Western origin, or to meet the demands of "good governance" laid down by external aid donors, but because of its impact on the lives of the people most harshly affected by it' (Clapham 1996: 251–252). Legitimacy is predicated on the need to both display the image of substance, thus being seen to be the Big Man, whilst at the same time supplying the networks upon which they drew their position.

Control of the African state, which immediately supplies recognition and prestige from the outside world, also opens up external political diplomatic backing and access to aid, which invariably further lubricates the patronage networks upon which the state is predicated. Much of the formal commitments made to ostensible regional organisations on the continent may be seen as cynical representations of this reality. In addition, assuming office in such states immediately grants membership of an elite club of African rulers who, as history has time and again demonstrated, group together for mutual support and protection both against external threats and domestic opposition to their rule. Yet such recognition, be it external or intra-Africa, is based on the concept of sovereignty which grants opportunities to rulers of even the most dysfunctional and weakest states, stimulating the perpetuation of a whole grouping of 'quasi-states' (Jackson 1984).

At the same time, the use and abuse of the 'organised hypocrisy' of sovereignty allows an assortment of external (non-African) actors to successfully construct commercial and military alliances involving state leaders and their courtiers as well as private corporations on

the continent (Krasner 1999), often—though not exclusively—at the micro-regional level. In short, many state elites in Africa use the mantle of sovereignty not to promote the collective good, but instead use it to bolster their own patronage networks and weaken those of potential challengers (Reno 2000). The international community is complicit in such a charade (Taylor 2003b). But importantly, in such circumstances and in the context of a regional respacing of Africa, relying upon the very same African state elites who benefit handsomely from such networks—but which has undermined the continent’s advancement—to now stimulate the continent’s development through regional development projects may well be highly problematic, despite the high hopes pinned on formal regional projects by the donor community. What this means is that formal state-led regional projects are, like many of the states signing up to them, quasi in nature. If analysts want to observe the “real” regional respacing on the continent then micro-regions are the best places to observe such empirical realities and where, from day-to-day, regionalisation helps contribute in some measure, to Africa’s survival, if not development.

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SIAMESE TWIN TOWNS AND UNITARY CONCEPTS IN BORDER INEQUALITY

David B. Coplan

*Where there is no inequality there is no need for borders.*¹

Introduction: borders out of Africa

Border studies, however termed (anthropology has of late preferred the less terrestrial notion of ‘borders and boundaries’) is by now a well-established scholarly field, and for many reasons the nearly 2000 miles of the United States—Mexico border has always been at its centre. These reasons include the early prominence of such founding fathers as Texans Ellwyn R. Stoddard (1983, 1989) and Amérigo Paredes (1993). Indeed the very term ‘borderlands’ was coined back in 1921 as part of the title of Herbert Bolton’s study, *The Spanish Borderlands: a Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (Bolton 1921). In the 1980s, when issues of political economy, immigration law, and international relations came to the fore, the US-Mexico border and its problems again took centre stage. By that time, border studies was itself sufficiently advanced as a field to influence public policy, as those who shaped such policies had come to recognize that border networks function as sites of strategy and problem solution. This helped to shift at least some attention away from the rhetoric of ‘sovereignty’ to the realities of social frameworks and economic strategies in distinct border locations (Stoddard 1989:409). In Europe as well, Strassaldo argues that political geography and geopolitics were the borders disciplines up to the end of the 1980s, but that more recently border studies there have been ‘characterized by a new emphasis on the socio-economic aspects; focussed on integrative, rather than conflictual processes, and on the problems of border people, rather than nation states...’ (Strassaldo 1996: 385). This is due in part to the recognition that borderlands, as opposed to borders, are about border communities, not

¹ Thomas Torrans, *Forging the Tortilla Curtain*.

the management problems of national states, and that 'Neighbouring relations between border communities are not international relations' (*ibid.*: 393) necessarily.

In anthropology, the quintessentially multi-disciplinary discipline, the great leap forward in border studies began perhaps two decades ago when critical scholars and practitioners, venturing forth from the address to economic and cultural interchanges in the south-western United States made by 'Chicano' (Mexican American) ethnic/area studies, staged a revolution in creative bi-cultural literary work (Anzaldúa 1987; Gómez-Peña 1993, 1996, 2005). Thus inspired, a range of new scholarship has moved to make significant theoretical contributions to anthropology, cultural and ethnic studies, and the re-examination of 'national' identities as well as to social history and literary criticism. Perhaps in no other intellectual landscape have scholars working in two languages and academic traditions established such equal and extensive partnerships in research and authorship. Further, they have in practical ways crossed the borders and elided the boundaries of academic territories to create an indivisible cross-disciplinary territory named 'border theory'. To sense this one need only peruse the multi-disciplinary bibliographies of the contributions to such recent work as Michaelsen and Johnson's (1997) volume of that name.

In recent decades, coinciding with the expansion of the European Union, European border studies have made perhaps an almost equal contribution to the field. That gratefully acknowledged, what then too of the continental focus of this discussion, Africa, the peripheral poor relation of the area studies' imperial family? It might have been predicted that Africa would serve primarily to provide empirical grist to the American and western European mill. Publications by such leading scholars as Paul Nugent and A.I. Asiwaju (Nugent and Asiwaju 1996) and P.O. Adeniyi (Asiwaju and Adeniyi 1989), however, demonstrate that such is not the case. But what is most significant regarding Asiwaju's seminal contributions is his singular interest in comparative cases and analysis. Border studies research, wherever conducted, tends to focus on particular locations: you study the border in your 'own' geographical purview. Perhaps borders are viewed as odd couplings between countries; no two relationships, seen 'close up' at the directly comparative level, appear particularly comparable. Yet the leading scholars in the field do not hesitate to generalise, often successfully, on the basis of a single extended case, or on that of all putative cases viewed together.

Indeed, local studies can have generalizing power if used comparatively, so border anthropology is necessarily built on border ethnography. As Asiwaju (1983:22–23) observes not only are borderlands comparable, but the common and comparable qualities of border life give the kind of insights into human behaviour that are the stock in trade of anthropology and other social sciences.

Asiwaju, a wiseman in the Yoruba mould who rushes in where fools fear to tread, has had the audacity to compare Nigeria's borders (plural!) with the United States-Mexico border (Asiwaju 1983). His point is not only to reveal similarities but to demonstrate further that 'Mexamerica' is not a unique research field. The comparison is fraught with methodological difficulties (is Nigeria's large size and well-oiled but distorted economy relative to its neighbours 'comparable' to such factors in the case of the U.S.?) and perhaps ultimately not fully convincing. But Asiwaju's larger claim, that research and analysis at the directly comparative cross-regional level promises significant rewards for the field, is well staked. And far from retiring from the field despite his own professional retirement, Asiwaju has continued to sound the comparative theme in further contributions (Asiwaju 1997, 2003) and inspired colleagues such as Nugent (2005) to follow. This is the point of engagement for my own comparative research, involving a comparison with the Mexamerican borderlands that might also at first glance be thought of as fetched from far too far.

Lesotho and Mexico: not so strangely similar

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with a population of just under two million and a total land area the size of the State of Maryland. San Marino, Andorra, and the Vatican problematically aside, it is the only fully independent state in the world entirely surrounded by another. That single neighbour is South Africa, for one hundred and sixty years a tireless antagonist and partner in crime along the tiny kingdom's winding border with the Orange Free State, Natal, and Cape provinces (since 1994, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, and Eastern Cape). The economy of the borderlands is desultory, with agriculture, livestock, and tourism the main economic staples and only one municipality that could be called urban—Maseru, Lesotho's run-down capital—along their entire roughly rectangular length. In contrast there is the mighty trail of the US-Mexico borderlands, almost

2000 miles in length and supporting a population of millions washed up in urban areas holding on to one another across the political and cultural divide for dear life. What could these two borderlands have in common? We shall see.

First things first. Both the US-Mexico and South Africa-Lesotho borders were bitterly contested for a very long period, and in both cases the resistance of autochthonous peoples prevented for a time the secure occupation by the ultimate contending settlers. In the case of Mexico, Native Americans prevented the extensive settlement of New Spain beyond the Rio Bravo (Grande), and made the northern territories claimed by Mexico very difficult to defend from Anglo-American encroachment and appropriation once the latter's superior power had begun to contain the Comanches, Apaches, and Yaquis. Along the lower reaches of the Mohokare (Caledon) River, aboriginal San ('Bushman') foragers and later, dispossessed bands of Khoekhoe ('Hottentot') and mixed-race ('Baastard/Koranna/Griqua') raiders posed the same problem for the Basotho, although they had greater ultimate success than the Mexicans in containing their attacks. Broadly, Hollywood could easily produce an action-packed 'southern' by having the Caledon substitute for the Rio Grande, Griqua-Khoe-San play the role of the Native Americans, the Basotho the part of the Mexicans, and the Afrikaner and British settlers and soldiers the part of the Anglo-Americans, Texas Rangers, and U.S. Cavalry.

While geography does not *determine* state borders anywhere in the world, certain topographical features often become the focus of political contestation and boundary-making. In both of our cases, the borders ultimately settled, after much dispute (over the territory between the Nueces and Rio Grande in Texas and the Caledon and Little Caledon in Lesotho) on major rivers that marked the extent to which the weaker nation was able to successfully defend its territory from annexation by the stronger. In the case of Mexico, President Antonio López de Santa Ana, of Alamo fame, lost about half of the territory originally claimed by the Spanish as New Spain to the US, while the Basotho royals could not defend the plains where their people farmed on the west bank of the Caledon, but only the foothills and mountains to its east. These plains represented almost two-thirds of Basotho agricultural land. Both these lost patrimonies have names: 'Aztlán' to the Mexicans, the 'Conquered Territories' to the Basotho. Where the rivers trail off (at El Paso, Texas and Wepener, Free State respectively), the dry borders follow a line imposed upon the weaker party by the stronger.

Because both borders were established through a process of war, resistance, and domination, the conquered local people (Mexican and Basotho) were not consulted as to where the border would ultimately run. Inevitably, numerous communities of Mexicans and Basotho (and their relatives, the Tswana Barolong) ended up separated from their countrymen on their conquerors' side of the border. As a result of these settler colonisations, Native Americans became part and parcel of the Mexican people (*mestizo* and *indios*) but segregated on desolate reservations in the U.S.A. While San were assimilated to the Basotho in Lesotho, they were exterminated on the South African side while the Khoekhoe were either expropriated and expelled or placed on small reservation-like 'locations' for the 'Coloured' (*mestizo*) population. The old landholders in the annexed territories, Mexican *rancheros* and African and Khoe (now called 'Griqua') chiefs and *kapteins* soon found their holdings pulled out from under them by every form of physical coercion, economic pressure, and legal and political manipulation and chicanery available to the settlers. Their people almost all ultimately became interlopers and manual labourers on the ranches, farms, and in the small towns along the border with their original nations.

This reduction of the conquered peoples to sources of cheap, subject labor, whether living in the annexed territories or migrating across the borders from Mexico and Lesotho themselves, was justified in part by a process of ideological and social racialisation. All black people in South Africa became subject to the system of racial identification, segregation, and domination that, a century after the border was demarcated, became the notorious system called *apartheid*, while Mexicans became the 'copper Negroes' (Torrans 2000:9) of the American southwest, subject to different legal regimes and conditions of employment than Anglos, a process facilitated by the Texans, who brought black slaves to work along side Mexicans in the border areas in the years before the American Civil War. Both peoples were disenfranchised but 'voted' (forgive the cruel irony) with their feet, moving back and forth across the border from rural villages to commercial farms to industrial areas as opportunity or necessity commanded despite increasingly systematic efforts to control their movements, exploit their labour, keep them out, and tie them down. On either side of the borders, borderlands were established on the basis of both territoriality and 'cultural affinity' ('nationality'). Through cultural affinity all the Mexicans and Basotho 'belong' to Mexico and Lesotho (in their pre-1848 extent) or rather to the *raza* ('race') and the 'Basotho

nation'. By territoriality, the people are Mexican or Mexican-American ('Chicano,' 'Mexicano'), South African or Bashoeshoe ('People of King Moshoeshoe; i.e. Lesotho Basotho') (Adejuyigbe 1989:28–29). People from the Mexico and Lesotho sides have spent the last 160 years 'voting with their feet' and re-occupying the lands lost to the conquerors. And so both Mexicans and Basotho have turned their cursed river spaces into culturally tributary places, watering life ways lived apart together, creating confluences of political division that seem set to marry roots and routes inseparably in the end.

Of course the differences between Mexicans and Basotho, Mexico and Lesotho, Rio Grande and Caledon, *Aztlan* (the Mexico lost in 1848) and the Conquered Territory (the Lesotho lost in 1849) are far more numerous and profound than the similarities, but so would it be with any such comparison. For Chicanos, for example, the issue of border culture revolves significantly around a peculiar *ambivalence* of race, in which they could see themselves as situationally either or both white or not-white, and attempt to gain full membership and acceptance in a majority white society that both incorporated them through hypogamous wife-taking and racialised them as a category of subjugated labour (Velez-Ibanyez 1996:57–88). For the Basotho, no such ambivalence or social fluidity was even thinkable within the stark white-and-black categorisations of South African colonial society. Then again, if you were *mestizo* in South Africa—'Coloured'—then racial ambivalence and the apartheid laws created to reverse it were indeed tailor-made for you. More pertinent to the crucial methodological basis of the comparison, the wealth of individual and collaborative research on both sides and across the U.S.-Mexico border is not paralleled along the Caledon Valley. The extensive research by both foreign and Basotho scholars and the richness and depth of oral history in Lesotho is not remotely matched for black communities on the Free State side, where Colin Murray (1992, 1999) and myself (Coplan 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b) are the major contributors to the recent literature (see also Asiwaju 1983:6).

Twin towns, trampoline cities

To point out the most important comparative key at this macro level, I would argue that David Lorey (1999:1) is mistaken when he asserts that the US-Mexico border is the only one in the world where underdeveloped

'third world' meets developed 'first world' *face-en-face*. Under the long-standing regimes of White mechanized farming (now agribusiness) and flows of migrant labour, there is another such border: South Africa—Lesotho. This is the primary reason for the particular relation on both the US-Mexico and SA-Lesotho borders of 'twin towns': municipalities linked by a formal border crossing that have developed because of one another. On the US-Mexico border these twins include Brownsville/Matamoros, Laredo/Nuevo Laredo, Eagle Pass/Piedras Negras, Presidio/Ojinaga, El Paso-Santa Teresa/Ciudad Juarez (a triplet city), Columbus/Palomas, Douglas/Agua Prieta, Nogales/Nogales (a Siamese twin), Calexico/Mexicali, San Diego/Tijuana, and several others. On the SA (Free State)-Lesotho border, the twins are Fouriesburg/Butha Buthe, Ficksburg/Maputsoe-Leribe (a triplet), Clocolan/Teyateyaneng, Ladybrand/Maseru, Wepener/Mafeteng, and Zastron/Mohale's Hoek. Such parallel development is due not simply to commerce of one kind and another, but also to the determining factor of imbalance or inequality that makes cross-border neighbours at once into friends, kin, and enemies. Equalizing these inequities drives the social economy of a border, where the economic lifeline is always based in differential valuation. The flow is always from low value to higher and inversely from higher costs to lower; buying and selling whatever is legal or illegal or expensive or inexpensive 'over there.'

Although farm produce from Mexico is also crucial to the U.S., as is Lesotho's highlands water to South Africa, for both of the wealthier and more powerful neighbours, the major cheap commodity is labor. And so on the subaltern side towns grow up as labour entrepôts, what the Mexicans, faced by high border fences and walls, call *ciudades trampolins* ('trampoline cities'). In Maseru, Lesotho, there is a district called Seapoint, which like its famous namesake in Cape Town, juts out into the water (the Caledon rather than the Atlantic Ocean), but the name can as easily connote an inland shore, where so many thousands of Basotho migrants and work-seekers from the interior have washed up awaiting passage to the other side. The same could be said of the trampoline cities of Mexico. On the dominant side, towns grow up as transportation junctions for the redirection of arriving workers, as well as mercantile centres where migrants returning home with their wages may buy goods and services directly tailored to this market. So important is this trade that retailers actively invent strategies to circumvent customs, sales taxes, and other government commercial regulations. Attempts by the authorities to intensify border controls, whether for

economic or political reasons, are routinely resisted by communities on both sides of the borders.

Somewhat more positively, twin towns may move over time from cooperation to functional integration, teaming up on production, business partnerships, employment, and social services. Alternatively they may act as economic antagonists. The scruffy industrial boom town of Maputsoe, Lesotho, founded in the 1960s as a 'reprocessing centre' to assist South Africa in evading economic sanctions, has prevented its twin Ficksburg, Free State from developing any industry at all. Even the more sophisticated products and retail services available in Ficksburg are now often provided more cheaply in Maputsoe—often by Chinese immigrant merchants—while Basotho continue to cross to take advantage of Ficksburg's government educational and health services. Ficksburg town is stagnant at perhaps 4,500 still mostly white inhabitants, while the attached black township of Meqheleng has swollen to 50,000, not a few of whom crossed the river from Lesotho.

The busier the border post, the greater the degree of social integration, and so we find that the border post at Maseru, Lesotho is South Africa's most active, while the crossing from Tijuana, Mexico to San Ysidro, California is the busiest land border crossing in the world. Intensity of interaction, even if asymmetrical, does not erase borders (Zúñiga 1998:40). As there is more business between borderlanders on either side and with the U.S. or Europe than with their own towns, in Lesotho as in Mexico, most roads and communications link the twin towns to one another, not border towns with their own national neighbours or interior. Border towns are founded and continue to exist for one another, and where they face one another, there is no frontier. While the majority of border town residents are originate elsewhere, cross-border family networks are the norm. Migrant families, including those of border officials, span the border, forming the base of social operations. Connections to migrants working in the receiving country are a form of 'social capital' which can be utilized by friends and relatives in the source region. Social capital also consists of the information leading to employment opportunities which the immigrants bear. Those who smuggle and then transport and market illegal persons or commodities are difficult to interdict, as cross border networks are close knit and mutually dependent (Miller 1981:28).

These borders represent theatres of opportunity, and their trade is not just a matter of different levels of economic development and value vs. price on each side. They also facilitate success in crime and

other enterprises, places to hide people and things, a base of operations, variable police cooperation and uncertain legal jurisdiction, problems of extradition, ethnic links, kinship networks, customs of cooperation, and antagonism towards central governments. The co-existence of an impossible to manage, porous boundary between separate countries with different legal and law enforcement environments gives these borders a certain utility to car and commodity thieves, drug and weapons smugglers, and illegal work-seekers and suppliers organized in bi-national syndicates that operate deep inside both neighbours' territory.

Workers on the move

The heart of the comparison here is in any case labour migration. Both Mexico and Lesotho, from the 1830s right up to the present, have sent large numbers of migrants to work in their larger and more developed neighbour. For the system to benefit the receiving country, this labour has to be inexpensive and willing to perform tasks that U.S. or SA citizens are not, at least at such low levels of pay. Underdevelopment, unemployment, and low standards of living in the sending country ensure that a surplus pool of potential workers is maintained. A comparable set of practices has historically been employed to sustain the viability of the migrant labour system for the receiving countries. The first is the military and then social subordination of the sending countries, entrenched by the racialisation of the migrants' national identity.

For Basotho, their status first as British subjects and then as foreigners did not exempt them from the racial subordination imposed on all 'non-white' persons in South Africa. Further, they entered South Africa, like all 'foreign natives' as temporary workers who had to secure their contracts, officially at least, in the labour depots of Lesotho before crossing the border. They could not reside in South Africa more than ten months in the year (lest they make claims for permanent residence), and had to return to Lesotho whenever their contracts expired or were cancelled. Even today, when their foreign African identity is no longer racialised, the 'two tier' system that separates labour migrants as a category from immigrants proper like myself, remains in place. Mexicans, as noted, were in a somewhat more ambivalent position, regarded and self-regarding as a different (*mestizo*, indian) race in some circumstances, white (Spanish, creole) in others.

This process of separate and therefore unequal accomplished, it has been important for the U.S. and SA to control the flow of male migrants crossing their borders while if possible keeping the wives and other family members of these men at 'home' in Mexico and Lesotho. The strategy is to avoid the costs of reproduction and maintenance of workers while accessing the benefits of their productive activity. This is most easily achieved if the low-skilled labour force is born and raised elsewhere, and presents itself ready to work in a state of health and adequate maturity. Such is the origin of the famous 'oscillating migration' or 'families divided' system made famous in the study of that name by Colin Murray (1981) for Lesotho, but applying equally to Mexico. So as Cornelius (1989:2) points out, 'the source communities function mainly as nurseries, rest-and-recreation centres for migrants temporarily worn out by their labors in the United States, and nursing homes for 'retired' migrant workers and their spouses who did not opt to settle permanently in the United States.' It is in the source community that raises the next generation of wage labourers destined for the fields and factories in the United States (Wilson 2000:195).

Many young, unmarried men entered to work in the United States in order to finance the family farm, hedge against crop failures, build a house back home, or exceptionally, even start a small business, prior to marriage. The family plot, no matter how modest, remained the site of the reproduction and maintenance of the family left behind and of the worker when he returned (*ibid.*: 194). While the Lesotho social system encouraged young men to marry more often just before their first migrant contract, the goals were similar. Underdevelopment in both countries ensured semi-proletarianisation in the source region, creating mobile and low-cost labour for the capitalist firms in the destination region. Second, the articulation between the household economy at the point of origin and the capitalist economy at the destination necessarily acquired a gendered character (*Ibid.*). Michael Burowoy, among the only anthropologists to directly compare the migrant labour systems of southern Africa and the American southwest, found that in both cases employers benefit from immigrant labour because part of the costs of the maintenance of the labour force is borne by the subsistence economy in regions where standards of living are lower (Burowoy 1975).

On the macro-economic level, both Lesotho (colonial Basutoland) and Mexico moved from local to trans-border modes of production, from the raising of livestock and crops to labour migration. Even if

the British colonial administration had not systematically collaborated with the white South African government and farmers to underdevelop Lesotho, the shortage of land doomed commercial agriculture in the country. By the Great Depression, the majority of rural Lesotho households had a migrant member in the mines, farms, factories, and towns of South Africa, on whom they depended both for cash income and to provide essential capital inputs for farming. A growing number of destitute Mexicans also sought work in Depression-era southwest United States, but the great rush came with the *Bracero* Program (1942–1964) initially intended to replace Americans under arms with willing, affordable Mexican hands (Miller 1981:135).

The Great Depression in South Africa and the Second World War in the United States also brought about an important change in the dynamics of the system, not much noticed at the time but one that looms large in border control policies and their implementation today. Among the new realities less visible but no less important, more than a quarter of Basotho migrants were female, a much larger proportion than commonly realized, since female migration was illegal. The hard-fought, often body and soul destroying struggle of Basotho women to work in South Africa is not a story I can tell here. But it is one of which my own family is a part, since my mother-in-law, Mrs. 'Nopi Sekhalo, a Johannesburg domestic worker from Lesotho, died from overwork, as the doctors said, at the age of 48.

What the presence of women migrants announced was that Basotho were now coming to South Africa more or less permanently, whether as individuals of either sex, or as families, or reunited family units, or newly formed neo-natal families in the urban industrial workplaces. As this was not possible (and still isn't) on the mines, the new pattern of family immigration demonstrated that Basotho were entering a range of other low-wage occupations. In 1963 the government of apartheid architect Hendrik Verwoerd, having woken up to the increasing numbers of Lesotho women settling in South Africa, enacted draconian measures to repatriate them to Lesotho. In the same year, passports were for the first time required to cross into South Africa. While these measures caused tremendous hardship and resentment, they succeeded only temporarily in stemming the tide of Basotho immigration. Further, the higher wages and living standards in South Africa began to attract the better educated, more highly skilled Basotho trained in Lesotho's colonial and mission schools. Basotho teachers, nurses, drivers, clerks and other office workers began to settle in almost every South African

town. The reality was that, despite 'local preference' labour regulations in the mining and other industries, the white government cared very little where South African business got its uniformly cheap black workers from.

In the U.S., the *bracero* program became a crowbar that pried open the doors of permanent immigration. Despite regulations designed to discourage it, male Mexican migrants often brought their young families, and women migrated on their own to swell permanent communities in the host country. Periodic legislative and police action to reverse the tide had little long-term effect. Even with the end of the *bracero* program in 1964, female and family immigration, not just migration, became a growing flood, so that today Spanish-speakers are the largest immigrant group in the U.S. and in some cases the majority population in southwestern states. The election of politicians of Mexican origin or descent to offices high and low is similarly commonplace. Similarly, after the transition to non-racial democracy in 1994, many Basotho, whether of South African, Lesotho, or dual national origin moved into municipal and provincial positions in the Free State.

In the meantime, since the early 1990s both Anglo-Americans and South Africans in general have become stridently vocal in opposition to such immigration. In the US, the 1986 legislation that was intended to regularize the status of Mexicans already long resident in the country while definitively stopping the flow of illegal immigration, only raised the tide. A similar 'amnesty' was offered to Basotho migrants in South Africa in 1996. In recent years, increasingly strict and militarized measures have turned Mexican immigration into a kind of desperate insurgency, with persecuted work-seekers often referring to the new, more extensive and fortified border fences and patrols as a new 'Berlin Wall.' In South Africa, a comparable tide of immigration from other African countries has awakened the fierce beast called 'xenophobia', as unemployed locals (*de facto* 35 percent) react bitterly and violently to the steadily growing visibility of lean and hungry black foreigners (see Coplan 2008). So a process of ad hoc, internal 'bordering' occurs in the midst of a situation in which the neophyte state itself has yet to establish definitive rights to residence. And as I have written elsewhere,

Indeed it is in this era that police, not very visible where actual street crime is concerned, have been spurred into self-enterprise by nationalistic exclusionary public sentiment. 'Border police' as they call themselves in Johannesburg, have made it their business, literally, to prey upon African immigrants, extorting bribes if they had the money, detaining and deporting them if they hadn't (Coplan 2009:74).

Basotho are caught up in this backlash as well, since Lesotho citizens are officially treated the same as those of any other foreign country, despite the long and intense involvement of Basotho with and among their only neighbours. Down on the border, Basotho like to say (however unfairly) that the restrictions to immigration are worse now than they were under white minority rule, and accuse overwhelmed SA Immigration officials of 'bringing back the old South Africa.'

As in Western Europe, immigration in the United States and South Africa has become not only a leading issue but also 'problem' of the day, often portrayed in the discourses of crisis. Why, as Tamar Wilson (2000:193–194) has observed, when whole families migrate permanently, do the Americans not benefit from the sending areas reproduction of labour? The answer is that the previous separation of reproduction and maintenance from production has recently tended to converge among undocumented immigrants, leading to their greater concentration in the United States. On a society-wide level, benefits offered by undocumented workers are no longer exceptionally high, and the costs associated with their reproduction and maintenance have both increased and become more visible. In both the United States and South Africa, employers are hooked on cheap migrants but need to promote and protect local and legal employment. Foreigners are resented even when they work at jobs locals won't work at. Where once labour was racialised, now refugee identity and illegal immigration is used for control. Employers want immigrants for work, and the government uses illegality to keep them cheap and subordinated. So the economic systems and immigration policies are interwoven in a schizophrenic relationship.

Down on the borders

In such situations of inequality, border control is the business of the dominant partner, border taxation the business of the weaker. Until recently, ordinary Mexicans would have considered the very idea of a 'Mexican border patrol' as some sort of punch line for one of the contemptuous 'Mexican jokes' so popular with Americans. More recently, pressure from the U.S. government as well as from the Mexican elite itself—it was the drug lords who organized the assassination of Mexican presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta back in 1994—to control the para-militarized drug cartels has led President Felipe De Jesus Calderon Hinojosa to send the Mexican Army against them. Lesotho

also depends entirely on South Africa for border control, and indeed has no other requirement than a valid passport from any nation to enter or leave the country. Taxation and fees are as noted a different matter, with the Basotho and the Mexicans using customs, and the Basotho in particular relatively high (20 rands = \$2.50) entry and exit fees and tax regulations to collect revenue from the border posts.

The spanner in the works is the increasing militarization of the U.S. southwestern border, intensified and accelerated since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Both South Africa and the United States are afflicted by nativism and xenophobia and in the absence of the former Soviet Union, the immigrant other becomes scapegoated as the new threat to national security and identity, and the common enemy responsible for all manner of social and economic ills (Wilson 2000:203–204). So at first glance it appears both ironic and puzzling that the border with Mexico should be fortified as a matter of national security, when the only terrorist attacks, unsuccessful or successful, have come from across the northern border with Canada, which is unfortified. In the case of the United States, the militarization of the border with Mexico and augmentation in the numbers of border patrol personnel can be interpreted as also aimed at re-separating the processes of reproduction and maintenance from productive activity. As immigrants are pushed into more dangerous terrain on their crossings, deaths from hypothermia and drowning are increasing. Although men will and do continue to cross the border to seek work, they will hesitate to subject wives, sisters and dependent children to the increased danger of border crossing (*ibid.*: 206). In Lesotho, men and women migrants will continue to cross into South Africa as they have always done, not as families but independently. In both cases, harsher enforcement stops oscillation, it does not send people home.

Historically, migrants everywhere help to build the economy of the host country, but they also invest in and develop home communities, with the less favourable side-effect of local class formation and widening social differentiation. The use of migration as an alternative mobility ladder has been perfectly acceptable to authorities in sending areas, but with tougher controls the ladder is more often climbed in the host country than in the country of origin. Recently, in an attempt to keep some of the interest and investment of migrants 'at home,' the Mexican government has authorized dual nationality for Mexican-born United States citizens. In Africa, where the painfully thin reality of sovereignty is concealed by its thick, hypertrophied performance

(especially at the border!), no such policy is anywhere in place. Both South Africa, and Lesotho, however, in practice turn a blind eye to dual nationality if the second identity is acquired legally, and the brief attempt by Lesotho immigration officials to treat Basotho who had acquired permanent residence status in South Africa as ‘foreigners’ was dismissed by popular resistance on the ground.

Indeed despite the hundreds of millions of dollars spent—South Africa spends a relative pittance—to somehow shut off the U.S. to unwanted immigrants while goods and services are somehow encouraged to flow, border controls generally do not work, but rather give way to a wide variety of strategic forms of dual residence and nationality. The Basotho have their own version of the old Chinese adage, ‘Beijing is far’: *Pitoli ea hole* (‘Pretoria is far’), meaning that laws and regulations promulgated in the distant capital expressing the state’s fantasy projections of boundedness and sovereignty evaporate into more practical and profitable arrangements on the border. Inevitably, a kind of ‘border culture’ develops as legal, logistical, and even social problems are worked out cooperatively on site between the officials of the two countries, and even by officials and members of the public. So the national officials’ job is to maintain the border as a legal boundary (i.e. barrier), while the local officials’ job is to cope with central government over-regulation. The recent building of high concrete cylinder walls across the Arizona desert near Organ Pipe National Park, in combination with such over-regulation, is what the frustrated and disgusted mayor of Douglas calls ‘our little charade on the border’ (Cooper 2003:15).

As I wrote earlier in my research, on the Caledon River the Free State—Lesotho border is essentially a business. While very little is at stake politically for either government, levies and fees large and small, official and unofficial, are charged wherever possible, and controls are kept just strict and visible enough to encourage crossers to pay to evade them, and just lax and unmonitored enough so that the business of evasion can be safely and invisibly transacted (Coplan 2001). This is a demonstration of Africa’s leadership in the de-nationalisation of identities, due to the de-territorialisation of African nationality. Nationalism and its fictions are bankrupt, and they cannot erase or assimilate local identities (Zúñiga 1998:48), even in the case of the continent’s one truly industrialized, aspiring ‘first world’ state. Indeed in Africa—and perhaps more often in the Northern hemisphere than is commonly realized—national governments are simply parasites of the

border (Torrans 2000:44). What do borders protect the citizenry from? Or is it only government that is protected? In Africa the state is thus the new or contemporary colonial power on the border. Pre-existing political structures, such as chieftaincies and regional ethnic formations, often span state borders. Even smuggling is only a crime against the state, and an evasion of taxation for which no services are provided in return, except the apparatus of harassment and appropriation to which smuggling is a response (Torrans 2000:335). While the situation is indeed entirely different where Latin and Anglo America wash up against one another along the Rio Grande and further west, the border in both places remains a problem of modernity: the modernist faith of the dominant political class ranged against the local, regional, and transnational modernism of the borderlanders.

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RESPACING FOR PEACE, SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT: THE AFRICAN UNION BORDER
PROGRAMME IN EUROPEAN COMPARATIVE
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Anthony I. Asiwaju

Introduction

As panacea for conflict prevention and facilitator of peace and sustainable development, regional integration demands the effective devaluation of the barrier functions and effects of the boundaries between participating sovereign states. The elimination of the border as barrier and its promotion as bridge between one another constitutes the acid test of sincerity of purpose of national states engaged in a regional integration project. Manifestations of “closed borders”, including unrelenting exercise of restrictive controls, suggest absence of a sense of commitment and a lack of seriousness of intention on the part of the participating State actors.

In Europe, beginning with the Western European initiatives in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the spectacular regional integration success story has derived from an ever increasing lowering of borders as barriers between the World’s oldest nation-states with, hitherto, a history of recurrent and most devastating territorial and border conflicts and wars. The inauguration of the European Union has been based on the theory and practice of the concept of ‘Europe without Frontiers’ enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty and the Schengen Agreement of 1992–1993 as well as the evolving European Constitution mile-stoned in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty on the European Union.

The result of these developments, focusing on the elimination of restrictive controls on the Internal Frontiers of the European Union and the pooling of policy in respect of policing, immigration and the administration of criminal justice, has been a growing European regional constituency and a consciousness that tends to transcend national boundaries and identities. Of particular significance for the European regional integration process has been the incredible lobbying influence, if not power, exercised by the directly affected local populations in the diverse border areas organised into the highly pro-active

Association of European Border Regions with headquarters in Bonn, Germany, and an influential operating office close to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. The pivotal role of the AEBR and, indeed, the wider organized civil society has ensured the evolution of the European Union as an organ not only of the democratically committed States and Governments but also, and even more importantly, the people themselves.

In Africa, as indeed other regions of the developing world, on the other hand, regional integration experiments have not met with a similar success in spite of demonstrable similarities in the basic structures and functions of state territories and boundaries. In the particular case of Africa, focused in this presentation, the records of failure have been remarkably dismal. While the desire has remained strong, the actual performance has been one of disillusion. The events have for long been an affair of governments rather than of the people; and the chances of success are constantly put to flight by contra-indications of negative nationalism and the attendant actual and potential boundary and territorial disputes and conflicts within and, more manifestly, between many a territorially adjacent African state. Pro-integration decisions, taken usually in the context of familiar-type summits of Heads of States and Governments, are not reflected in the behaviour of the law and border-enforcement agencies of the individual national authorities.

The recently inaugurated African Union Border Programme (AUBP) is aimed at changing the trend in Africa in the general direction of the more desirable developments in the European Union. Based on a solemn Declaration of the historic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Border Issues held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 7 June 2007 and a unanimous endorsement of the Executive Council of the African Union in its 11th Ordinary Session held in Accra, Ghana, 26–29 of the same month, the AUBP is a four-fold policy instrument targeted on a simultaneous pursuit of (a) Accelerated Demarcation of the International Boundaries Between Member States; (b) Cross-Border Cooperation Focusing on a Regional Approach to the Planning and Development of 'Cross-Border Areas' or 'Afrégios' ('African Regions'), equivalents of the more familiar 'European Regions' or 'Euregios' in the European integration process; (c) Capacity Building with particular reference to relevant knowledge infrastructural innovations and specialized training and research programmes in support of cross-border cooperation initiatives and wider regional integration orientations; and, finally, (d) Relevant Resource Mobilization within and outside Africa. The

strategies for implementation embrace roles for local, national, regional and continental levels of execution, based on a strict adherence to the principle of subsidiarity.

Clearly the climax and obviously the most comprehensive policy instrument ever designed at continental level on the issue of Africa's notorious inherited borders, the AUBP has resulted from a long historical process that dates back to the accidental origination of the modern African State territories and boundaries in the European 'Scramble' and subsequent imperialist partition of the continent at the turn of the 19th century.

This presentation, focused on the African Union Border Programme in context of a comparison with the European historical experience, is organised in six distinct but inter-related sections. The first, which is this Introduction, is presently followed by the second, focused on a brief discussion of the conceptual challenges posed by issues of comparison with special reference to the question of comparability between Europe and Africa in the matter of State territories and boundaries. The third provides a sketch of the history of the border factor in the European regional integration process. The fourth is a critique of the history in Africa with special reference to border policy-making and policy implementation in the era of the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) from 1963–2002. The fifth, on the on-going African Union (AU) phase, is a more detailed description of the recently launched Border Programme. The essay concludes with a sixth section of critical reflection on the Euro-African historical comparison and the logic for linkages and networkings of organized research and training programmes and institutions.

Africa and Europe compared¹

Comparisons evoke controversy. With particular reference to Africa and Europe, objections are encountered on both sides: national and racial pride gives rise to opposing emotions. Whatever the reservations about comparisons between Africa and Europe, however, it is reasonable to consider the political boundaries and related borderlands in the one continent essentially as extensions and a replica of those in

¹ The content of this Section is drawn from the Chapter 13 of Nugent and Asiwaju (1996), re-produced as Chapter 4 of Asiwaju 2003.

the other. In Europe, as in Africa, most borderlands represent areas of distinct official languages, national histories and cultures as well as divergent economic systems, mutually opposed legal traditions and parallel administrative practices.

This is not surprising since the boundaries, which spawned the borderlands of Africa in the first instance, were creations of rival European imperialists who drew and, for a long time, managed them on the model of the boundaries of their own respective metropolitan countries. As has been discussed in several scholarly works, the boundaries of modern Africa are so much European impositions that all the legal instruments for dealing with them have remained exactly the same 'treaties', 'agreements', 'protocols' and 'notes' as were established between erstwhile European colonial powers.

The rulers of independent African States, territorial successors of the former European colonies, have maintained the status quo. Not only were the legal instruments inherited; the institutions, personnel and the procedures have either remained the same or were derived from the antecedents which Europeans have in dealing with boundary problems. Little wonder, then, that border relations in Africa have continued to feature the same kind of mutual jealousies, conflicts and tensions, and have continued to be managed within the framework of the same kind of laws and procedures that were applied to such relations in the Europe of the nation-state. Structurally, the borders of Africa pose as many obstacles to international co-operation and regional integration efforts as have known of their European equivalents.

African and Africanist scholars are quick to lament that Africa was badly partitioned. They are also quick to point out that boundaries of modern African States are artificial, often arbitrarily drawn with little or no regard for pre-existing socio-economic patterns and networks; that the boundaries have erratically split unified culture areas and hopelessly disintegrated coherent natural planning regions and ecosystems; that a great deal of Africa's contemporary economic problems have stemmed from the fact of territorial division into such a large number of competitive, rather than complementary, national economies; and, finally, that much of the continent's current political problems have originated from the 'arbitrary nature of the colonial boundaries [which, among other things] results in...artificially juxtaposing incompatible or antagonistic groups' (Ballandier 1966: 44).

However, the crucial point that is often missed is that, in all these matters, the boundaries of national States in Africa are not substan-

tially different from the European ones. Far more than Africa—the second largest continent in the world, divided into only 54 national States—Europe, territorially less extensive than West Africa, has been structured into 35 or so sovereign States including such mini-states as the Vatican City, Andorra, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg, not to count enclaves such as Llívia, a Spanish settlement across the Franco-Spanish border in France, completely surrounded by French villages.

The point has been elaborately made elsewhere (cf. Asiawaju 1985: 223) that Africa was not the only or even the first continent to be partitioned; that Africans were not the first or the only partitioned peoples; that, indeed, the European partition of Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was essentially an extension of a process by which the same powers who partitioned Africa had partitioned and were continuing to partition their own continent and peoples among themselves; and, finally, that the phenomenon of artificially partitioned ethnic groups or what Myron Weiner (1985: 130–158) has called ‘transborder peoples’ is as much a feature of boundaries and borderlands in Africa as it has been in Europe and the wider nation-state world created by Europe.

One major limitation in arguments that seek to emphasize the uniqueness of the European experience vis-à-vis the rest of the world is that they are often made without the benefit of empirical data derived from in-depth case histories. Take, for example, Professor J.R.V. Prescott’s influential opinion that ‘there are more important differences in respect of the boundary evolution between Europe and the rest of the world than there are between any other two continents’ (1987: 175). Each of Prescott’s arguments has been strongly contradicted or, at least, seriously questioned by findings of case studies.

The first of such arguments, for instance, is that ‘boundary evolution in Europe was entirely an indigenous process... [whereas] in the other continents... the indigenous process of boundary evolution was overlain and generally halted by [European] colonial activities’ (*ibid.*). A major problem with this argument is that it leaves unanswered the fundamental question of what it is to be “indigenous”. Except when a subjective racial perspective is adopted or the reference is to an imaginary Europe that is socially an undifferentiated mass, it will be difficult to see any significant difference between, on the one hand, the position of the Catalans, ‘an ethnic group, neither French nor Spanish’ (Sahlin 1989: 22), split into two by the Franco-Spanish border drawn through their homeland in the Cerdanya valley of the Eastern

Pyrenees; and, on the other, the Yoruba, also an ethnic group, neither English nor French, split into two by the Anglo-French colonial (now international) boundary between British Nigeria and French Dahomey (now Republic of Benin) drawn through the homelands of specific subgroups in Western Yorubaland (see Asiwaju 1976).

Available evidence leaves one in no doubt of the extremely close similarity between Catalan and Western Yoruba perceptions and modes of response to the inter-sovereignty borders drawn and maintained across the respective ethnic homelands, the Catalonian stretching further south and north of the Franco-Spanish border, just like the specific Yoruba subgroups in Western Yorubaland in the wider context of the culture area that stretches much further east and west of the Nigeria-Dahomey colonial border. For Catalans and the Western Yoruba, the border between France and Spain in the European case, and that between British Nigeria and French Dahomey in the African, could not be considered as indigenous any more or less than France and Spain could be so considered in the Cerdanya or Western Yorubaland.

European national States were as much territorial as their colonial possessions in Africa and elsewhere. Both in Europe and Africa, as the Catalan and Western Yoruba case histories can be effectively used to demonstrate, partitioned and locally impacted communities initially viewed the inter-sovereignty boundaries in their backyards as impositions from outside. Politically, socially and economically, the boundaries of modern national States, in Europe first and then in Africa and elsewhere, were known to have intruded into and strongly impacted on local community life. In the Cerdanya and Western Yorubaland, as indeed in other specific partitioned ethnic homelands, acceptance or rejection of the boundary was dictated, as is to be expected, by the extent to which the boundary policy in operation coincided or failed to coincide with the interest of the respective local communities or even individuals. Both Catalan and Yoruba case studies featured very interesting episodes of armed revolts and, more typically, protest migrations against unpopular policy measures in operation from time to time on one or the other side of the borders (cf. Asiwaju 1976, chaps. 5 and 6; Sahlin 1989, chap. 3).

With regard to the problem of national identity faced by politically partitioned peoples, the argument for comparability of African and European experiences has been remarkably reinforced by the findings of yet another fascinating case study, that by William Miles, focusing

on the Hausa astride the Nigeria-Niger boundary (cf. Miles 1984). Not only has the Hausa complemented the Yoruba case study, by its specific focus on the problematic of national identity in a borderland, it has shared more or less the same basic concerns with our European case, that of the Catalans across the Franco-Spanish border: by reason of the divergent socialization processes put in place on the different sides of the borders, the elites are drawn in opposite directions in their sense of national identity in spite of the fact of a common pre-partition history and indigenous culture.

At home or overseas, European powers are known to have adopted basically the same methods and procedures to acquire and possess territories for the State. While the time-frame might be substantially different, taking centuries in Western Europe and only a few decades to accomplish in Africa, the processes are exactly the same everywhere. Both in Europe and Africa, for example, boundary evolutions passed through basically the same three phases of allocation, delimitation and demarcation. In Alsace-Lorraine, as in the Cerdanya and Western Yorubaland, European statesmen, politicians and diplomats employed the same combinations of 'conquest, trickery and cession' (Prescott 1987: 175) to acquire territory and achieve the allocation, delimitation and demarcation of the boundaries. A reader of the Catalan case study, who is familiar with African parallels, would be entertained by stories of identical diplomatic manoeuvres between representatives of metropolitan States engaged in territorial acquisition both in Europe and overseas.

Especially intriguing is the way in which incidents of 'blatant and unscrupulous manipulations of facts' (Sahlin 1989: 47) by one party in diplomatic negotiations vis-à-vis the other in Europe remind one of the same type of 'manoeuvre' in Africa in the era of the European scramble and partition. Take the issue of the widespread incidence of falsified protectorate treaties produced by German officials to prove or strengthen their cases against rival British or French claims in West, Central and East Africa. Most of such treaties were believed to have been forged or invented in ways similar to the 'many reasons' which Marco, one of the officials on the French side of the negotiation for the 1659-60 Treaty of the Pyrenees, had to invent simply to make the Spanish side 'uncomfortable' (*ibid.*).

In the Cerdanya, as in Western Yorubaland and similar African localities that have been subjected to focused research, the negotiations at the allocation and delimitation stages of boundary evolution

were undertaken exclusively by high-up State functionaries with little or no reference to the interests and views of the local people. Thus what has been written with respect to the Franco-Spanish boundary in the Cerdanya could very well have been written about other similarly partitioned localities in Africa or elsewhere: namely, that at the end of the allocation and delimitation exercises, what the two sides of the negotiations settled for was ‘a boundary that was not a natural frontier... [but an artificial boundary] which ran counter to any conceivable history of the Cerdanya’ (Sahlin 1989: 53).

At these stages—of allocation, dominated by heads of State signing treaties, and of delimitation, dominated usually by the Foreign Ministers certainty about geographical positions did not count for much. Cardinal Mazarin, the French Foreign Minister and key figure in the negotiations of the Treaty of the Pyrenees, was already three weeks into the discussions at the Isle of Pheasants before consulting a map (Sahlin 1989: 39), and when, in the Accord of 13 May 1660, the Spanish conceded ‘Thirty-three villages together with their jurisdictions’, it was not known what and where these villages were² or, more importantly, what the actual limits were of their jurisdiction (Sahlin 1989: 48–50). This uncertainty eventually gave rise to familiar controversy when technical experts appointed by the two governments to carry out the actual demarcation finally met to undertake the practical counting, leading to the French acquiring ‘effectively more than fifty villages’ instead of the thirty-three stipulated in the delimitation accord (Sahlin 1989: 49).

Thus, contrary to another patently faulty argument that boundary evolution in Europe, unlike in other continents, was rendered much simpler because of a more complete geographical knowledge (Prescott 1987: 176), the same kind of problems of uncertainty of knowledge about the limits of pre-existing jurisdictional sovereignties were encountered in respect to traditional African States as was the case with villages, counties, cantons and bailiwicks, to mention just a few examples of the jurisdictional units of pre-nation-state Europe.

² Compare this observation with the more popular one made by Lord Salisbury, the well known British Prime Minister in an after-dinner humour on the occasion of the signing in London of the Anglo-French Convention of 1890 that delimited the Nigeria-Niger Border: “We have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white mans foot ever trod; we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediment that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were...” (quoted from Anene 1970: 3).

Indeed, so elusive did the limits of jurisdictional authorities prove that the transition from jurisdictional to territorial sovereignty and boundaries took centuries to attain in Europe: in the particular case of the Cerdanya, this was not fully achieved until 1868. At this final phase of boundary evolution, that of demarcation, whether in Europe or Africa, the ultimate alignments were more significantly influenced by grass-roots level realities than ever entered into considerations at the earlier phases of allocation and delimitation.

If then, as we have so far tried to show, there are more similarities than differences in the history, structure and functions of State territories and boundaries in Europe and Africa, lessons of experience in the one continent must not be lost on those engaged in the scholarly study and policy analysis of the problems in the other continent.

The history of modern Europe, as homeland of the nation-state and its border problematics, confronts Africa with only one of two choices: the path of war and human tragedy, which constituted the emphasis in the era from the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 to the end of the Second World War, on the one hand; and, on the other, the option of peaceful co-operation characterized by commitment to regional integration and trans-border cooperation of the period since 1945. While in the one era, that of nationalism, the basic concern was for sovereignty and boundary maintenance, in the other period, that of internationalism and regionalism, the dedication has been to the simplification of the border. As Lord Curzon has indicated, the choice is between boundaries as factors of war and death and boundaries as factors of peace and life (cf. Lord Curzon 1907).

The choice for Africa cannot be the war and death ends of the border equation. The lessons in European experience are not to be sought in Europe's pre-1945 history, characterized by negative nationalism, international conflicts and extremely destructive territorial wars. Nor should the tragic events that have led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia be regarded as the likely outcome for Africa's mostly multi-ethnic ex-colonial States. What must be of great attraction for Africa is in Europe as the region of the most evolved history of political boundaries, and the alternative provided for practical and fruitful experience of the post-1945 era. This period has witnessed phenomenal achievements not just on matters of regional integration, but also and even more significantly on the elimination of borders as barriers and precipitants of conflicts and their systematic entrenchment as catalysts for international cooperation and sustainable development.

The border focus in European integration process

Africa cannot achieve regional integration without having directly to confront the question of the obstructionist and conflicts-generating boundaries between the national States seeking to integrate. There has to be a concerted effort at converting those boundaries from their prevailing traditional postures as ramparts into new roles and functions as bridges of active cooperation between territorially adjacent States, consistent with a serious commitment to a wider regional integration agenda. In this regard, Africa's search for relevant lessons in the post-1945 European historical experience must not be limited to studies and analyses of the workings of the European Economic Community and its better known establishments in Brussels; the search must be purposively extended to focus particularly on the extremely crucial complementary role of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, including such of its pivotal institutions as the European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning and, more critically, the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe which, together, have distinguished themselves in pioneering and nurturing the institutionalization of a distinctly cooperative border policy regime for Post-War Europe.³

There is no doubt about the tremendous contribution of the European Economic Community and its better-resourced institutions in Brussels to the entrenchment of the new transborder cooperation policy regime in Europe of the Union. This is especially so with regards to the issue of a special development focus on the border areas. Consider, for example, the bench-mark execution of the Single European Act of 1986 and the emphasis placed on the primacy of 'regions' as basic units of planning and development. The border areas have been exceptionally privileged by that policy instrument. Apart from being the heart of the 'trans-regional' category, so explicitly defined in the Act as 'regions in different States, especially those on both sides of borders between member States', the European border areas also benefited directly from the disbursement of a special European Region Development Fund, established singularly to finance a five-yearly International Region

³ For a more extensive discussion of the comparatively more significant historical role played by the Council of Europe as the 'Best Practice' for Africa, see Asiwaju (1984).

Development Project (INTERREG), launched in 1990, to accelerate infrastructural improvement of the European 'Cross-Border Areas' or what George Frazer (1986: 37) has tagged 'the Border Country' ('Pays Frontieres'). As we would shortly come to see, the concept of 'Pays Frontieres' or 'Cross-Border Area' caught the fancy of the most influential African integrationist of our time, Alpha Oumar Konare who, successively, as President of Mali, Chairman of ECOWAS and, lately, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, has introduced it to all the three inter-connected policy-making arenas.

But substantial as the EEC's contributions have been, it is very important to recognize that the initiation and nurturing of the more challenging political aspect of the new territorial and border policy-formulation for Post-War Europe were achievements, primarily, of the Council Europe, founded in 1949 and headquartered in Strasbourg, the highly strategic and historic French border town on the Rhine as boundary with Germany, which also eventually became the seat of the European Parliament. Together with such sub-institutions as the European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning and, more especially, the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Council of Europe provided the institutional framework for all the vital processes which preceded and have since followed the adoption in 1984 of the truly historic European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation Between Territorial Communities or Authorities (for the full text and related documents see Ricq 1992).

The Convention is, perhaps, the most significant policy instrument ever adopted by any regional body anywhere in the world, targeted on a determination to convert international boundaries and borderlands from classical nation-state postures as barriers into more regional-integration-friendly and conflict-preventive roles and functions as bridges of cooperation between integrating States. The preparatory series of European Symposia on Transborder Cooperation in 1972 and 1975, the drafting of the Convention up to and including its being opened to signature in Madrid in 1980, plus the flurry of meetings and conferences to ensure implementation since coming into force in August 1984 were all activities that have taken place and are still taking place within the framework of the Council of Europe (see reports in Asi-waju 1984). The Council of Europe provided the political space for the vital contributions made by the organized civil society organisations, notably the Association of the European Border Regions and the European academic community. The European Outline Convention

provides and remains the inspirational model for Africa, including on-going consultations on the effective implementation of the African Union Border Programme.

African border policy in the era of the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU), 1963–2002

While, in the aftermath of the tragic Second World War, Europeans were beginning to give serious thoughts to putting an end to the era of recurrent international conflicts and border wars and putting in place an alternative programme of preventive regional integration and transfrontier cooperation, Africa was entering the new phase of decolonization or liberation and the attainment of political independence by the erstwhile European colonial territories.

Be that as it may, the independence gained by modern African States was achieved in every case within the framework of the boundaries as were arranged in the context of the rivalries between the European powers and their notorious ‘Scramble’ for African territories at the turn of the 19th century. Ill-defined and hardly completely and satisfactorily demarcated, for the most part, African boundaries were fraught with enormous risks for conflicts and tensions within and, more particularly, between several territorially adjacent States. Rival interests in cross-border natural and strategic resources are not known to have helped matters.

Nevertheless, considerations for continental peace and jealous defence of newly won sovereignties dictated maintenance of the inherited boundaries in preference to the alternative boundary re-drawing that was and is still being advocated by some. It is against this background that one must seek to understand the policy of boundary maintenance initiated and vigorously sustained in the era of the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) from inception in 1963 to disbandment and replacement by the African Union in 2002. The OAU policy was anchored on the specific provisions in Articles II (1c) and II (3) of the foundation Charter and the Resolution of the very First Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Cairo, Egypt, from July 17 to 21, 1964.

Thus, contrary to the opinion that the OAU did nothing about Africa’s problematic borders (for a sample of opinion see Soyinka 1994), the border factor was indeed in the front burner of the Organisation’s

policy agenda. However, as if to repeat and re-orchestrate the opposite effect of the Berlin Treaty of 26 February 1885 which, instead of mitigating European powers' territorial rivalry in Africa, merely accelerated the pace of the Scramble and the partition, the OAU Charter of 1963 and the 1964 Cairo Resolution were not known to have stemmed the tide of boundary disputes and conflicts in the continent. The proposal made by Nigeria to the 37th Session of the OAU Council of Ministers in Nairobi in 1981 for the establishment of an OAU Boundary Commission that would function as the continental body's own specialized border problem-solving agency, indicated the gravity and topicality of border-referenced conflicts in the region. The fact that the 1981 proposal was revived as an item on the 1991 OAU Summit agenda at Abuja illustrates the extent to which Africa's border problems have remained vibrant, if not degenerated into a running sore, for reasons mostly of inadequate care.

The number of actual border wars and threats of war is simply legion. To the long list of cases of conflicts arising from territorial claims made by specific states over their proximate neighbours may be added the equally numerous examples of civil wars incidental to secession attempts within borders of a good number of the Member States. Accordingly, Africa became the theatre of the most devastating wars that have plagued the world since 1945. The causes of these conflicts vary as widely as the specific cases themselves. However, with particular reference to the international dimension in focus, a great deal of the occurrences has involved the problems of the generally indeterminate character of the borders and rival national interests in transborder economic and strategic resources. Whatever the causes, the border wars and threats of war have continued to compromise the issue of peace and stability and proved completely detrimental to the cause of regional integration and orderly economic planning and development of the continent and constituent sub regions.

If, in the 21st century, Africa is to leave behind the era of recurrent and detractive border conflicts and be launched into a new millennium of durable peace and accelerated development of the type that has been witnessed in the post-1945 European Community, policy makers and executors in the continent must be made to embrace a radicalized re-conceptualization of the role of shared international boundaries. In the place of the familiar but essentially obsolete sovereignty-insistent assumptions and perspectives, which have tended to perpetuate the vision of shared borders more as factors of conflict than

of co-operation between States, emphasis must now be placed on the functions of borders more as bridges than as barriers must now be placed on the functions of borders more as bridges than as barriers between contiguous national States. The “war” and “death” ends of the border equation, as noted earlier, must be deliberately and systematically discarded in favour of the “peace” and “life” alternatives. Transborder natural and human resources, traditional precipitants of conflicts and wars, must now be systematically explored and promoted for their potentials as factors of opportunity for positive international interaction. The recently inaugurated African Union Border Programme is the response to this quest for a more appropriate border policy regime.

The African Union Border Programme⁴

The African Union Border Programme (AUBP) marks the climax in the long process of the evolution of a comprehensive border problem-solving policy-making at continental level. It is based on a formal Declaration of the first-ever Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 7 June 2007 and the firm endorsement by the African Union Executive Council taken at its 11th Ordinary session held in Accra, Ghana, 26–29 June 2007.

Since African countries attained political independence, their borders, drawn in a context of rivalries between European imperialist powers and their late 19th century scramble for territories in Africa, have been a recurrent source of conflicts both within and, particularly, between the discreet sovereign States. Most of the borders are poorly defined and not adequately demarcated. The location of strategic and natural resources in cross-border areas poses additional challenges. The AUBP has been designed to comprehensively respond to these and related challenges.

The Programme is based on the conviction that, while the inter-sovereignty boundaries may be maintained to preserve the identity of

⁴ A Handbook on the AUBP is currently being compiled coordinated by this writer. With Foreword by Former President Alpha Oumar Konare, the immediate past Chairperson of the African Union Commission whose tenure witnessed the formal articulation of the Programme, the book is structured to be an authoritative source of relevant information and provide guide to the on-going implementation of the programme.

each individual State, the achievement of greater unity and solidarity among modern African States and peoples requires the reduction of the burden of the borders separating them. The Member States of the African Union are convinced that, by transcending the borders as barriers and promoting them as bridges linking the States with one another, Africa can significantly deepen the on-going regional integration process and, by so doing, strengthen continental unity, promote regional peace, security, stability and sustainable development.

The AUBP has been defined in terms of four over-lapping objectives, namely:

- (i) *Border Demarcation*, including the delimitation, where this has not been agreed; re-affirmation where existing demarcation so requires; and densification in places where visibility on the ground has not been sufficiently assured (On the basis of a 2002 directive of the Assembly of the African Union, all the processes should be accelerated and be concluded by 2012. Demarcation should be effective, though simple and inexpensive);
- (ii) *Cross-Border Cooperation Promotion*, including mutual confidence-building through a comprehensive planning and development of shared cross-border areas as means for deepening the ongoing African integration process;
- (iii) *Capacity-Building*, notably training and research activities and the development of innovative knowledge infrastructure and specialized institutions in support of the new cross-border cooperation initiatives and regional integration orientation; and
- (iv) *Resource Mobilization*, The focus here is on sourcing for funds, including technical assistance, in support of the three preceding components of the Programme Objectives. It is, perhaps, the most critical component of the Programme Objectives in which Africa's Development Partners are expected to play crucial roles which the AU Commission, the RECs and individual AU Member State, are to stimulate and complement.

The AUBP is implemented interactively at several levels: national, regional, and continental. As clearly indicated in the Ministerial Declaration, the responsibility at each of these levels is defined on the basis of the principles of subsidiarity. With regards to border delimitation and demarcation, primary responsibility lies with the sovereign decision of States. They must take the necessary steps to facilitate the

process of delimitation and demarcation, including maritime boundaries, where such an exercise has not yet been undertaken.

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union are to assist the States in mobilizing the necessary resources and expertise, including facilitating exchange of experiences and promoting inexpensive border delimitation and demarcation practices. The AU Commission should conduct a comprehensive inventory of the state of African boundaries and coordinate the efforts of the RECs. The Commission should also launch a large-scale initiative aimed at sensitizing the international community on the need to mobilize the required resources and other related support, including ensuring that the former colonial powers grant free access to all the information in their possession regarding delimitation and demarcation of the African borders.

Concerning cross-border cooperation, similarly multiple-level roles have been stipulated and prescribed for the various stakeholders, including, in this case, the local territorial authorities and communities at sub-national level.

Thus, the local stakeholders should be the direct initiators of cross-border cooperation under the auspices of the States. The States should, with the assistance of the AU, facilitate the expression of local initiatives and mandate the RECs to implement regional support programmes for cross-border cooperation. The RECs and AU should provide the legal frameworks necessary for the development of cross-border cooperation and establish regional and continental funds for financing such cooperation. The AU should take necessary steps to ensure the inclusion of cross-border cooperation in all major international initiatives launched for the continent. It should also coordinate and facilitate the exchange of information and good practices between the RECs.

As regards capacity building, the AU Commission is to carry out an inventory of African institutions that offer training in this domain; explore avenues for collaboration with relevant training centres outside Africa, especially the European Union; and, on the basis of the afore-mentioned exercise, design a capacity building programme in the area of border management, including cross-border cooperation and wider regional integration orientations.

The planning of the AUBP implementation strategy was the subject of a special international seminar held in Djibouti, December 1–2, 2007, encouragingly well attended by representatives of Africa's Development Partners in Europe, North America and Asia, as well as of

the United Nations Organisation and its relevant organs. Apart from mobilizing for funding and technical support, a very important significance of the active interest taken in the AUBP by foreign national and international organisations and institutions is the demonstration of a commonality of interests based on the global replication of the African experience of the phenomena of international boundaries and borderlands. Of particular importance here, and one of special relevance to this essay, is the invitational participation of Europeans and European organisations, notably the representatives and high-rank official spokesmen of the highly policy-influential Association of European Border Regions:⁵ they not just attended but made powerful solidarity contributions as much at the Djibouti Seminar as in the other AUBP foundation events including the crucial preceding Meetings of Experts in Bamako in March and Addis Ababa in June 2007.

So far, the implementation process has followed the three broad areas of the objectives and in proportion to the extremely limited funding support being obtained from Africa's Development Partners. The German Technical Cooperation assistance has been the first and, to date, the most substantial and concrete. An equally substantial funding assistance for the AUBP has been indicated by the Italian Government, while similar commitments by other Development Partners are being awaited.

The available resources have been or are being deployed to cover the following specific projects

(A) *Border Demarcation*

- (i) Mali-Burkina Faso;
- (ii) Mozambique Borders with Malawi and Tanzania;

(B) *Cross-Border Cooperation*

- (iii) The formal Launching of the existing ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Cross-Border Initiatives Programme Pilot Project for the Karakoro Sector of the Mali-Mauritania Cross-Border Area; and finally,

(C) *Capacity-Building*

- (1) *African Regional Institute, Imeko, Ogun State, Nigeria*

⁵ For an up-to-date information on the AEBR and its operation, see European Commission 2000, a compendium widely distributed at the Meeting of Experts for the AUBP in Bamako and Addis Ababa.

- (iv) Infrastructural Renovation,
- (v) Train-the-Trainers Programme on International Boundaries and Borderlands Studies, a Six-Week Pilot Project involving the active participation of an interdisciplinary group of senior academics from 13 specially selected Nigerian Universities August/September 2008;
- (vi) A One-Week Executive Cross-Border Security and Policing Course (Ogun State/Nigeria-Benin Pilot Project, Oct. 27–31, 2008;
- (2) *African Union Commission/Conflicts Management Division (CMD of the Peace and Security Department, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.*
 - (vii) Border Information/Geographic Information System Data Base,
 - (viii) Second International Symposium on River and Land Border Demarcation, Maputo, Mozambique, December 17–19, 2008;
 - (ix) Actualization of the AUBP Unit in the CMD, AU Commission, Addis Ababa
 - (x) Five major regional workshops aimed at sensitizing the Regional Economic Communities in the Traditional Constituent Regions of African Union.
- (3) *Consultancies/Commissioned Studies on*
 - (xi) African Legal Instrument for Cross-Border Cooperation, on the model of the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation, Between Territorial Authorities and Communities;
 - (xii) Capacity-Building; and
 - (xiii) Public Relations for the AUBP

While many of these start-off projects have been or are being successfully executed, some others are being slowed down, if not stalled, by factors of familiar-type bureaucratic and procedural bottlenecks. On the whole, no support from outside, however big and generous, can substitute for Africa's own internally generated resources: the implementation of the AUBP on the more durable long-term basis would require Africa's own special Border Region Development Funds operating at national, regional and continental levels.

The AUBP is coordinated at the AU Commission through a special technical Unit located in the Conflicts Management Division of

the Commission's Peace and Security Department in Addis Ababa. Operating under the day-to-day supervision of the Head of the CMD, the AUBP Unit is guided by a Pilot Steering Committee with Members drawn from the five constituent regions of the African Union. The Unit is the modest fulfillment of the dream for a continent-level Boundary Commission that Nigeria had proposed to the defunct OAU. Hopefully, it would perform to justify an envisaged future growth and expansion into a full-fledged AU Border Commission with requisite capacity for quick intervention and sustainable response to its admirably inclusive, multidimensional and multilevel operational mandate.

Below the AU Commission, the Programme implementation is carried out at the levels of both the Regional Economic Communities and constituent Member States, based on a well defined over-lapping allocation of responsibilities. While the African Union Commission may initiate programmes, its main responsibility is to stimulate the interest and active participation of the REC's and individual Member States who are to ensure the really critical activities in cross-border areas connecting them with one another across shared international boundaries.

The border factor in African and European conflicts and respacing processes: The challenge of comparative historicisation

To appreciate the centrality of boundaries as a factor in the generation, resolution and prevention of conflicts within and between States occupying a region is to understand the wider meaning of the concept itself as something that extends beyond the more familiar territorial dimension of reference to physical demarcation between sovereign State territories and of the internal differentiation into the distinct politico-administrative divisions as provided for in the constitutions of such specific States. We need to appreciate the extension of meaning, which embraces the functional and conceptual categories such as those that define limits of specific social groups and organizational structures, including linguistic and ethnic entities, religious affiliations, occupational and professional associations, social classes, gender as well as national and international corporations, just to mention a few examples of border-referenced entities and phenomena.

While our focus has been on the strictly territorial dimension with special reference to international boundaries and, therefore, on

inter-African conflicts, it is important to be aware of the inter-related challenges posed by the wider range of internal boundaries, including those of ethnic and sub-ethnic groups, that often provoke or fuel several of the well known internal conflicts and crises, sometimes producing grave cross-border spill-overs and contagions of war in neighbouring countries.

The relevance of international boundaries and borderlands (peoples and lands in proximity to an international boundary) to issues of peace, security and sustainable development derives from their well known paradoxical roles as factors of conflicts and wars at one level or of cooperation and peace at the other, depending on the policy put in place by any State vis-à-vis its territorially adjacent neighbour. This image of a paradox, presented by borders and borderlands between adjacent sovereign States, has been widely recognized. Raimondo Strassoldo, a well known sociologist of international boundaries, has explained the “ambiguities” in terms of the fact that:

[Borders] divide and unite, bind the interior and link it with the exterior; (they) are barriers and junctions, walls and doors, organs of defence and attack. Frontier areas [borderlands] can be managed so as to maximize either of such functions. They can be militarized as balwarks against neighbours, or made into areas of peaceful interchange (1989: 393).

It is the fact of these “ambiguities” which had obviously impelled Lord Curzon in 1906 to observe, as we have noted earlier, that “frontiers [i.e. borders] are, indeed, the razor’s edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, or of life or death to nations” (Lord Curzon 1907).

As we have seen, these “ambiguities” suggest that the range of policy choices open to decision makers is limited to only two options, no matter how well delineated and demarcated the borders may be: conflict or cooperation; or, to return to Lord Curzon, “war or peace... death or life”. This point is so well illustrated by the history of Western Europe, cradle of the nation-state and its border problems: while, in the one era from the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 (the Treaty to which the birth of European nation-states are generally dated) to the end of the Second World War, the chosen path was generally one of closures, frictions, wars, boundary adjustments and revisions, and attendant human tragedies; in the period since 1945, the option clearly has been one of openness, territorial stability and peaceful cooperation characterized by regional integration, transborder planning and sustainable development.

The Berlin West African Conference of 15 November 1884 through 26 February 1885 marked for Africa the inception of the modern State system based on the model of the classical nation-state of pre-1945 Europe, with a demand for precise and, characteristically, artificial and often arbitrary territorial framework. Although the founding fathers of the OAU were quite aware of the problems of peace and stability posed by the colonially inherited state territories and boundaries, the policy of retention that they decided and sustained had always stood in need of a supplementary instrument for a systematic conversion from inherited posture of barriers to more positive roles as bridges between the Member State. Primary concern for sovereignty and pre-occupation with total liberation of the continent from all traits of European colonialism including the apartheid regime in South Africa, did not leave room for the next-level-policy review in favour of systematic conversion of the continent's colonially inherited borders from barriers and conflict generation to bridges, conflict prevention and a special development focus. In spite of relevant scholarly research, publications and advocacy, mainstream African policy-making continued throughout the years of the OAU to ignore demonstrable potentials of the continents international boundaries for cooperation, peace and security building and sustainable development.⁶

Indications for the more desirable policy turn-around began to show in the dying hours of the Organisation and its eventual replacement by the African Union. Witness, for example, the adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002; and, more importantly, the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. Though its Article 4b lists respect of borders existing on achievement of independence among the principles of the Union, the Act also stipulates that the Union's objectives include achieving greater unity and solidarity among African peoples, accelerating the

⁶ Virtually all of this writer's entire academic and policy research career and public life have been devoted to this cause, see Akinyeye (2009), published to mark his 70th Birthday on 27 April 2009. A particularly important and policy-influential publication is his 1984 professorial inaugural lecture, *Artificial Boundaries*, already cited, and 'Comparative Borderlands Studies: An Autobiographical Reflection on Africa, North America and Europe' in David Coplan (ed.) *African Border Studies* (A Special Issue of the *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, a publication of the US-based Association of Borderlands Studies).

political and socio-economic integration of the continent and promoting peace, security and stability. In all these respects, the African Union Border Programme adopted in June 2007 is, to date, the climax and most inclusive policy instrument. Although the contents are distinctively African, there is no doubt about the historical impact and stamp of the European Union on the formats of both the African Union Commission and even the African Union Border Programme.

This essay certainly bears all the features of standard disadvantages of comparative history methodology (for a more detailed discussion see Asiwaju 2003–2004; and Manning 2003–2004). As listed by Jürgen Kocka, a leading expert, these include: over-dependence on ‘secondary literature, because the linguistic skills required for cross-cultural comparisons at the level of primary and archival sources exceed the abilities of most historians’; taking cases out of their ordinary spatial and temporal locations and contexts; isolating otherwise interconnected events to permit their being meaningfully compared, an approach that runs foul of mainstream disciplinary doctrine; and, finally, the absence, generally, of causal interactions between the two or more social phenomena in focus (see Kocka 2003). However, and as Kocka himself has admitted, these disadvantages of ‘far-flung, decontextualized comparisons’ are outweighed by the benefits, including ‘a more enhanced heuristic value; more easily demonstrated relevance to ‘a global age’; and, above all, the bridging of the gaps often created by commonplace engagements with over-specialization (*ibid.*). While not overlooking the contextual distinctiveness of each region, modern State territories and boundaries in Africa and other regions of former European colonization are too similar to those of the erstwhile metropolitan countries for any meaningful historicisation of the former to ignore a comparison with the other. Africa’s search for ‘best practices’ in the management of boundary problems can only ill-ignore the lessons in the historical experience of Europe.

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STAYING PUT IN MOVING SANDS:
THE STEPWISE MIGRATION PROCESS OF SUB-SAHARAN
AFRICAN MIGRANTS HEADING NORTH

Joris Schapendonk

Introduction

Traditionally migration related research has focused on the ending sides of migration. The general emphasis has been on the decision making process before migrating (the pre-migration phase) as well as on migrant's adaptation and integration at the ending stage of migration. Paradoxically, migration as a process of moving has been understudied. This derives from the conventional understanding of migration being an unproblematic transition of a place of origin to a certain destination. However, a closer look at contemporary sub-Saharan African migration shows that migration processes are often more complex than this simple linear movement. Many migrants undertake lengthy and often dangerous overland journeys which contains periods of temporary settlement and subsequent movements (Collyer 2007). Others fly to relatively unknown areas in hope of reaching their primary destination from there, since they lack the means for reaching it directly.

It is important to note that sub-Saharan African migration, and trans-Saharan migration in particular, is not so European focused as it is often represented. Many sub-Saharan Africans¹ are going to Northern African countries as their primary destination. In fact, there are estimates suggesting that more sub-Saharan Africans live in North Africa than in the European Union (de Haas 2007). The large scale regional migration and the reception of refugees in neighbouring countries prove that, contrary to what is often believed in the North, South-South migration is the dominant form of international migration in Africa (Adepoju 2008; Awumbila and Manuh 2008).

¹ Although most of my respondents came from West and Central Africa, I have chosen to use the broader geographical indication of sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite the dominance of intra-continental migration in Africa, migration to Europe (and Middle East, Asia and North America) is definitely rising (Baldwin-Edwards 2006). The explanation goes beyond the traditional push factors of political and economic instability of many African countries. The more cultural explanations concerning the opening up of African societies due to modern communication means and the fascination for modern lifestyles in Western areas gain importance in the field of international migration from South to North (Gebrewold 2007; Ros et al. 2007). “Adventurism” is also an important motivating factor in many cases (van Dijk, Foeken and van Til 2001; Kothari 2008). Hence there is a growing aspiration in African societies to emigrate to the North, especially among juveniles in urban spaces. However, these aspirations emerge in times of social and political closure of the European Union. The recent heightening of the fences around the Spanish exclaves Ceuta and Melilla, the numerous sea patrols and the strengthened visa regimes prove that indeed the fundamental human right of free movement is incomplete. Every person has the right to leave any country, including his/her country of birth, while at the same time states have the sovereign right to exclude newcomers in order to protect public interests (Singh Juss 2006).

An important consequence of the growing migration aspirations and the simultaneous closing of Fortress Europe is that many would-be immigrants attempt to enter Europe unauthorized. For the migrant, this requires a considerable sum of money, courage, the right contacts and some organizational capacity. Many individuals do not have the right mix of these ingredients resulting in a growing number of sub-Saharan African migrants waiting in European border regions for their chance to enter their ‘El Dorado’. There are considerable African ‘transit communities’ found in the Maghreb countries, Turkey and more surprisingly in countries such as Ukraine (Uehling 2004). From the European perspective, the accumulation of transit migrants at its borders is the main reason to regain its migration controls. And there we have the (self-)realization of a *cat and mouse game* in the liminal spaces of the Euro-African borderlands with, as we probably all know, serious humanitarian consequences.

Sub-Saharan African transit, or stepwise, migration is changing EU-African borderlands politically, spatially and socially. However, changes do also occur deeper in Africa. Tamanrasset in Algeria (Bredeloup and Pliez 2006; de Haas 2007) as well as Dirkou in Niger (Brachet 2005) have changed from remote desert towns to places of

steadily economic prosperity, mainly because of the structural presence of temporary migrants. Dakar and Saint Louis in Senegal have recently become well-known places of departure for the Canary Island which nowadays includes the presence of European border guards (Schapendonk and van Moppes 2007; Carling 2007a).

This contribution focuses on the stepwise migration process of sub-Saharan African migrants² heading North with a strong actor centred approach. The objective of the study is twofold. Firstly, it aims to gain more insights into the migration processes by investigating migrant's flexibility and dependency. Secondly, this study examines the way sub-Saharan African migrants adapt to *and* use 'en-route places' in order to understand better the geographical notion of 'place' and the impact of mobility on places. Altogether migration, and in particular sub-Saharan African migration, is predominantly analyzed in terms of social networks which overlooks the importance and particularities of 'places'. Moreover, theoretically, mobility and 'place' are mostly positioned as 'enemies' of each other; mobility may lead to *placelessness* or *non-places* (Augé 1995; Siddle 2000; Creswell 2004). This contribution emphasizes that places are of vital importance for mobility and vice versa.

Before starting the analysis, some methodological considerations concerning the often used concept of transit migration and subsequently the research settings, are outlined below.

Moving from uni-dimensional transit migration

The stepwise migration process of migrants is predominantly analyzed with the help of the concept transit migration which is generally understood as migration to one country in order to reach another country.

² It is important to note here that, in the case of stepwise migration, economic migration and refugee flows are not easy to distinguish. Often reasons to emigrate overlap: political refugees have economic considerations as well (van Hear 2004) and often economic migrants are also moving because of political reasons. Moreover, people change these static policy categories over time (e.g. asylum seekers become 'illegal migrants' if their cases are rejected). However, more important here is the fact that economic migrants and political refugees use the same means, take the same routes and face the same vulnerabilities and problems during their process of moving. Because of this growing migration complexity, more and more academics, policy makers and NGOs are aware of the 'mixed migration' or 'migration-asylum nexus' (Papadopoulou 2005).

However, this concept is highly politicized since it is predominantly used in the framework of potential unwanted migration towards the European Union (Içduygu 2005; Baldwin-Edwards 2006; Düvell 2006). This affects not only the neutrality of the term; it also assumes that this sort of stepwise migration occurs merely in the EU-neighbourhood. This neglects the fact that many migrants who arrive in the European border regions, have often travelled for a longer period of time.

However, the politicised character is not the only problem attached to the concept. As several researchers note, transit migration is defined in various ways and the dividing line between transit migration and multiple migration is rather vague (de Haas 2007; Düvell 2006). Therefore it is proposed in the literature to frame transit migration, methodologically and theoretically. Herewith it is attempted to distinguish the phenomenon from other forms of migration (Düvell 2006, 2008). Transit migration is, according to the latest proposition of Franck Düvell (2008), a stay of more than one week to up to three months in a country which the individual migrant is intended to leave again. There are thus two main aspects that matter: migrant's intentions and the length of stay.

Despite the provision of clarity, this definition is criticized here for several reasons. Firstly, the intention approach underestimates the restrictions migrants face during their process of migrating. By focusing on intentions one creates the assumption that migrants can (easily) fulfil their migration project, while, to the contrary, the situation of transit migrants is often characterized by restrictions; people cannot move forward since they are not authorized to do so or because they lack social/financial capital. The situation of restrictions forces migrants to wait for an indefinite period of time. Many migrants may never reach their desired destination, some return (or are returned) home before they have even attempted to move onward.

Secondly, the intention approach is limited in explaining migrant trajectories since it leaves out the multiplicity of choices migrants have in transit spaces. For instance, sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco may build up economic businesses while they are still 'intending' to go to Europe. In case of some economic success migrants may decide to stay in perceived transit areas, while an eventually subsequent deprivation of the situation may migrants decide to leave again. To summarize, the intention approach is limited since it inherently holds a linear notion of migration (leave—transit—settle) which does not correspond with

the dynamic character of reality. Thereby the definition underestimates somewhat paradoxically the restrictions migrants face as well as the responsive agency of migrants.

Alternatively, so-called transit migration can best be analyzed in terms of opportunities. Firstly, 'the opportunity thinking' reflects on migrant's current living situation as well as future possibilities. Many transit migrants, who have the 'intention' to reach Spain from Morocco, would take the opportunity to go to Italy if the opportunity appears to them. The opportunity approach also includes the possible improvement of daily life in perceived transit areas which helps to clarify the 'stayers as second best option'. As indicated above, some migrants who had the intention to go to Europe beforehand, decide to stay in perceived transit areas because they live there relatively successful lives (de Haas 2006). In addition, the opportunity approach helps to explain cases of pushed transit. Sometimes migrants who did not have any aspiration to go to Europe beforehand decide to go there since the living situation in the current residence place can not meet their expectations. There is sufficient evidence to note that generally European neighbouring countries are very difficult places for sub-Saharan African migrants to live in (e.g. Morocco, Algeria, Turkey and Egypt), partly because of the European induced migration controls which affects behaviour of domestic security agents (Baldwin-Edwards 2006). After all, the opportunity approach holds a multi-dimensional logic which pays attention to restrictions as well as migrant's changing perspectives.

The second element of transit migration is the time dimension. The argument is then that anybody with a temporary stay of longer than three months in a country which he/she 'intends' to leave again, can be analyzed as temporary migrant (Düvell 2008). This temporal categorization creates some difficulties as well. Firstly, there is an empirical consideration which makes this categorization debatable. When you interview a migrant in his/her earliest period in a so-called transit country, he/she is categorized (by the researcher/policy-maker) as transit migrant. However, when you meet him/her four weeks later, he/she might have turned into another category; a temporal migrant. Secondly, to categorize all migrants who have stayed longer than three months in a transit country as a 'temporary migrant', neglects the fact that European policies have been increasingly restrictive and therefore have lengthened the stay of migrants in third countries. In other

words; transit migration is not so transitory for many people going through it (İçduygu and Yüksekler 2008). Again, the restrictive elements of contemporary migration are underestimated.

The analytical value of *being in transit*, is that it helps to explain the changeability, and hence unpredictability of individual migration processes. It is a good starting point to deconstruct the often thick red arrows and lines on migration maps presenting migration as a one-way and almost unstoppable flow from the South to the North. The pinpointing of the concept in terms of time and people's intentions, however, does not help us to understand the realities on the ground. For this reason, transit migration and multiple migration are approached as complementary and overlapping types of migration rather than completely separable phenomena. To avoid conceptual misunderstandings the less sensible term of stepwise migration is preferred. This term emphasizes that migration often involves stepwise undertakings with multiple options and changing opportunities of individuals. However, the term *transit* will still be used in combination with geographical designations (transit places, transit spaces) and to indicate migrants' waiting statuses.

Research settings and methodology

This study on sub-Saharan African stepwise migration and its spatial outcomes is based on three periods of fieldwork with slight different characters. During the first period of fieldwork several places in three different countries are visited: Spain (Barcelona, Madrid, Granada, Almeria, Roquetas del Mar,) Morocco (Rabat and Oujda) and Senegal (Dakar and Saint Louis). In these places sub-Saharan African migrants with a stepwise journey were interviewed. Additionally, migration experts, local NGOs and representatives of international institutions (Red Cross/Red Crescent, IOM, UNHCR etc.) were interviewed in order to better understand the (local) context. A second period of fieldwork took place in Morocco and had a more in-depth character. There interviews with sub-Saharan Africans were conducted in two important migrant places; Rabat and Oujda. Istanbul is the third research locus. There sub-Saharan Africans with different migration routes from the well-known trans-Saharan routes to the Maghreb countries were interviewed. In total there were 77 respondents, highly

Table 1: Overview of interviews

Country of Respondent	Location of Interview				Total
	Spain	Morocco	Turkey	Others	
Nigeria	1	12	11	–	25
Congo (DRC)	–	11	2	–	13
Senegal	3	2	5	–	10
Cameroun	1	3	1	1 (Netherlands)	6
Ivory Coast	–	1	2	–	3
Mali	1	2	–	–	3
Ghana	2	1	–	–	3
Comoros	–	–	2	–	2
Somalia	–	–	2	–	2
Guinea Bissau	1	1	–	–	2
Guinea Conakry	–	1	–	–	1
Liberia	–	1	–	–	1
Gabon	1	–	–	–	1
Togo	–	–	–	1 (Senegal)	1
Gambia	–	–	–	1 (Netherlands)	1
Rwanda	–	–	1	–	1
Sudan	–	–	1	–	1
Burundi	–	–	1	–	1
Total	10	35	28	3	77

heterogeneous in terms of countries of origin (see table 1), social-economic background and reasons for migrating.³

Altogether, this research contains a multi-local *place* perspective by investigating migrant's adaptation to and usages of places. However, the place perspective contains a risk of merely gathering migration 'snap-shots' and thereby underexposing the migration process as a whole. Therefore some extrapolation is needed to fulfil the first objective of the study; gaining more insights into the stepwise migration

³ Among these 77 respondents there were 14 women (18%). This seems not to coincide with the global trend of the feminization of migration (Castles and Miller 2003). However, similar qualitative research on sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco (CIMADE 2004; Collyer 2006; AMERM and CISP 2007; Lahlou 2007) and Istanbul (Brewer and Yükeseker 2006) have comparable percentages of female respondents varying from 9% to 41%. One explanation is that women are migrating in different ways since stepwise migration processes, and particularly overland journeys, are extremely exhausting and dangerous.

process. The solution is found in a *flow* perspective. To overcome the problem of migration snap-shots migrant's presence are contextualized with the help of migration histories. More prominently, it is chosen to 'follow' migrants in order to understand the unforeseeable and dynamic aspects of migrant's trajectories. In times of writing 9 migrants (all men), are 'followed' over a longer period of time. Of these 9 migrants, 6 are interviewed in Morocco for the first time and 3 in Turkey. In the course of some months 1 migrant returned home, 4 have reached Europe (2 Greece, 1 the Netherlands, 1 Italy) while 4 migrants are still outside Europe in times of writing.⁴

This following of migrants does not mean the physical accompanying of migrants during their voyage, but implies, methodologically, experimental aspects such as interviewing people by telephone and internet (messenger chats and email conversations). Herewith it is attempted to grasp the dynamics of stepwise migration. After all, as Ralph Grillo (2007) states, migrants become rather "sojourners" instead of only "settlers", meaning they change places regularly. In addition, the longitudinal element is important since time is a crucial factor in migration, as Cwerner states: "times migrate with people" (Cwerner 2001). Time shapes the context of migrant's stay in a particular country. For instance, migrants may shift statuses over time and migration controls may differ in intensity. Particularly, time is a key element for people in transit since they have mostly the aspiration/expectation of staying only temporarily in a transit place. When this temporary residence involuntarily turns into semi-permanent or permanent settlement this may lead to frustration.

Migrant's precarious situations and research agendas

It is stated earlier that transit countries near the European borders are generally difficult places for sub-Saharan Africans to live in. Many sub-Saharan Africans have no legal status and hence lack any form of institutional protection in the European neighbourhood. Moreover, many migrants experience a hostile environment with expressions of discrimination, economic exploitation and police harassments. This has serious consequences for many individuals living there. How-

⁴ During coming years, efforts will be made to follow more individual migrants.

ever, it also creates complex research settings in which suspicion is omnipresent (see also Suter 2008). The context of vulnerability and suspicion does not automatically mean that migrants were reluctant to participate in this research project. To the contrary, most of the respondents seem to have their own agenda to participate. Some were asking for money after the interview (economic agenda), others participated because of political reasons. Among these respondents the general reason to participate was that 'it is very important that people in Europe know what is happening in their backyard.'

The notion that (irregular) migrants in precarious situations may have their reasons to participate in scientific research has several implications for qualitative research. Most of all there is the issue of attachment/detachment. In anthropological literature, for instance, there is ambivalence between researchers and the people they study. The collecting of data is predominantly based on a position of closeness. At the same time it is acknowledged that the total immersion in the research context can never be attained; researchers will always be 'outsiders' (Horst 2008). Here it is argued however that being an outsider has not only disadvantages. During my fieldwork I experienced that a lot of people were willing to talk to me *because* I was an outsider. They asked me questions about life in Europe, about migration strategies and European politics. Consequently, this fieldwork was not a one-way flow of information from respondent to researcher. It was clearly an interchange of information in which migrant's agendas were present as much as my research agenda. Once more this made clear that 'research on social relations is made out of social relations which develop within and between the multiple sites of researchers' expanded fields' (Crang and Cook 2007: 9).

Aspirations, routes and destinations

Sub-Saharan African migration is, in the tradition of the new economic of labour migration, mainly explained by collective decision making processes. Not individuals decide whether to migrate or not, whole households, or even communities do (Stark and Bloom 1985; Lambert 2002; Wagbou 2006; de Haas 2007). Once the decision is made to leave, sub-Saharan African migration is predominantly explained further by social networks. People migrate to places where some family members, friends or acquaintances are living (Bretell 2000). Consequently the

assumption is that migrants know where they are going, who they will meet and where they end up. This depends on (transnational) social networks, hence the remark: people are not migrating, networks do (Wabgou 2006).

What is striking here is the omission of the actual process of moving, as if migrants always a) have chosen a specific destination and b) reach that desired destination c) by means of an unproblematic journey. Indeed stepwise migration contains a different picture.

Remarkably, this study found that many 'stepwise migrants' have not a clear destination in their head where they are going to; they have rather abstract migration goals (see also Collyer 2007; Papadopoulou 2008). 'Europe', 'Schengen', 'The West', are often given as desired destinations, instead of Paris, Brescia, or my family in Madrid. In many cases no geographical indication is given at all. Their aspirations are described as: 'finding a safe place to live in', 'anywhere', 'a place where I can live a normal life'. Hence, migration destinations are often moving targets; if a place/country of residence does not meet the expectations/aspirations of a specific migrant, he/she will do their best effort to leave again. The abstract migration goals make migrants rather flexible.⁵ This explains the fact that the majority of respondents stated that the aspired destination has changed at a specific time. One illustrative example is presented below. A Liberian migrant in Morocco said the following regarding his decision making process:

R⁶: When I left my country I went first to Nigeria. I stayed there for around three years. First I had some small jobs, but life was not much better than in my own country. One day I met some Nigerian friends and they decided one day to go to Europe and I just decided to join them. That is how I came here.

I: But, when you left your country, did you, at that point in your life, want to reach Europe?

R: I wasn't thinking of Europe at all! I just left my country to go out and look for work and the destination was Nigeria. Europe is far away, you know, I didn't think of that.

This section describes that new plans may emerge unexpectedly. The meeting of new people inspired this person to go to Europe. After this decision, he explained, he had a travelling period to Rabat, with interim immobile periods for almost a year. From Morocco he unsus-

⁵ This is in line with the "sojourners" argument of Grillo (2007).

⁶ R = Respondent. I = Interviewer.

cessfully attempted three times to reach Europe by boat. This example not only indicates that migration dreams may emerge rather spontaneously, but also that these dreams are often not easily reached.

At the same time it is important to note that Europe, as a destination, may not only come up as a 'new dream' but also as a response to a deteriorating and sometimes emergent situation in the present country of residence. Several Congolese migrants in Morocco, mainly recognized refugees, stated they have been "pushed in transit" since the humanitarian situation for black Africans deteriorated rapidly in that country. Some Nigerians in Istanbul stated they fled from the war in Lebanon to Istanbul, from where they now attempt to reach Europe.⁷ Again, perspectives have changed and hence migration aspirations change. Surprisingly, for many sub-Saharan African migrants residing just outside the European borders and waiting for their chance to enter the EU, Europe was *not* the primary destination. The abstractness, and hence changeability, of migration aspiration is a first indication that migration is often not a linear process from A to B.

However, migrant's aspirations are not the only explaining factors of the dynamics of stepwise migration. During the study more insights is gained into the zig-zag routes of migrants. In a geographical sense, many migration routes are illogical since proximity is only a marginal explaining factor. The most important factors of the non-linearity of stepwise migration are further outlined here.

Firstly, as the Senegalese geographer Dr. Papa Demba Fall⁸ stated, many Africans have rather different geographical conceptions compared to European knowledge of geography. The far majority of African migrants do not use maps, partly because they lack the education to do so. More importantly, migrants, at least those moving for a period of time through Africa, move mainly within ethnic boundaries which transcend state borders. They move with the logics of social/ethnic networks instead of merely geographical logics (for two case-studies on non-linear internal migration see de Bruijn, van Dijk and van Dijk 2001). In a way, the importance of social networks is acknowledged here. However, since the stepwise migration processes contain extreme environmental difficulties (crossing the Sahara Desert) or some irregular

⁷ Both cases indicate that indeed refugee flows and economic migration are not always easy to distinguish.

⁸ Interview 16-4-2007 at INFAN institute, Cheikh Ante Diop University Dakar.

aspects (the crossing of borders without authorisation), migrants need assistance from third persons. Thus, although migrants were described above as highly flexible, they notwithstanding are dependent on third persons for at least a specific part of the journey. Hence social networks are not sufficient to explain migration processes and their routes; migrants need hybrid networks that include all types of brokers. Moreover, migrants create collectives because of the often hostile environment and *en route* dangers (see also Collyer 2006a, 2007). These networks and social contacts are often locally based instead of transnational and exist for a specific period of time rather than they are permanent linkages.

As a consequence of the hybrid networks, the involvement of brokers and smugglers is a second explanatory factor for the non-linearity of migration. More than once, migrants find themselves in places they do not want to be at all; they are all too often misled by their smugglers or transporters (see also van Liempt 2007). Surprisingly, a considerable number of sub-Saharan African migrants in Istanbul stated to be football players being promised to receive full contracts at a European football club; apparently, after an unpaid trial period at a Turkish club, they ended up as irregular migrants without any club to play for. They are misled (see also Brewer and Yüksekler 2006). Another illustrative example is that of three Nigerian sisters in Rabat. They stated that they should have been brought to Europe; that is what they paid for. At the end, they find themselves 'stranded' in Morocco, a country they never had in mind. These migrants have to re-organize their journeys in order to reach their desired destination.

Thirdly, a related factor to the smuggling practices is the increase of migration controls forcing migrants to take laborious routes since they need to depart from places where European border controls can be avoided. Briefly stated, border controls make some departure areas less popular than others. It is often stated that the increase of border controls has shifted departure areas southwards making maritime migration journeys even more risky (Carling 2007b; de Haas 2007). There are at least two market mechanisms concerning these smuggling practices. Firstly, a growing demand for border crossings increases smuggling prices. Secondly, the intensification of border controls increases the risk for smugglers (and migrants) to be caught which also makes prices go up. Consequently, migrants may decide to go to other departure places, more or less unexpectedly, while they already reached a

European borderland. This is illustrated by a telephone conversation with a Nigerian respondent recently arrived in Italy.⁹

- I: So you have reached Firenze...I still can't believe it! How did you manage it, by boat?
- R: Yes by boat...but first I had to go all the way to Libya! It was very difficult, it was a very long journey! And from there I took a boat to Italy.
- I: You first went to Libya? That is indeed a very long road...but why did you go there!? You were already very close to Europe, in Morocco.
- R: In Morocco the money they ask is too big! They ask too much money for everything. That is why a lot of people leave Morocco to Libya.

This respondent changed his plans for economic reasons, the smuggling process in Morocco were just too expensive. Another illustrative example of migrant's laborious routes because of migration controls is that of a Togolese respondent who has travelled all the way to Morocco (a journey of approximately 3,500 kms). In Morocco, he noticed that it was very difficult to reach Spain. For this reason he decided to go to Senegal (a country relatively close to his country of origin) in order to reach the Canary Islands. Finally, he did not dare to cross the ocean because of the physical danger and intensified migration controls. Instead he decided to go to Nigeria to look for work there. This indicates that what has started as South-North migration may also turn into South-South migration.

Flexible arrivals in Europe

For those migrants actually reaching Europe, their stepwise migration often continues meaning that places of arrival are seldom places where migrants stay. In the case of the Canary Islands, Lampedusa and several Greek Islands migrants get replaced to the mainland by the authorities after a period of time.¹⁰ There a whole new process of orientation starts. As a migrant from Cameroon said in Madrid: 'Once you are inside, the real migration begins.' Thereby he refers

⁹ I have met this migrant for the first time in Rabat.

¹⁰ It must be noted here that a considerable number of migrants are returned with the help of readmission agreements to the country of origin, or sometimes even to the country of departure. For instance Greece and Turkey formally have a readmission agreement regarding irregular migrants.

to the completely different perspective of opportunities that emerges once European mainland is reached; for migrants there is a whole new range of possible destinations inside the European Schengen-zone.

In the case of Spain, many sub-Saharan Africans find work in the agriculture in Andalusia. These harvests are often seasonal and migrants therefore move synchronically with the harvests. From February till June, they help out with picking strawberries in Huelva and from December till February with the olive harvest in Jaén, Cordoba, Granada, Malaga and Seville. Besides this seasonal mobility in the more rural areas, sub-Saharan Africans may also move between urban places inside Spain. For instance, many Senegalese street vendors in Granada have also lived for a while in Barcelona or Madrid.¹¹ Other African migrants, however, cross national borders again. A representative of a Senegalese migrant organisation in Catalonia stated that there is a “Barcelona-Milano connection” meaning that many Senegalese move regularly between those two cities. This is underlined by recent studies indicating that onward mobility of African migrants is not only related to ‘asylum-hopping’; also non-asylum seekers of non-European origins change places regularly (Schuster 2005; Grillo 2007; Schapendonk and van Moppes 2007; Kothari 2008). In case of irregular migration, this is in line with the broader analysis of Jordan and Düvell (2002). They argue that the deregulations of labour markets create conditions in which migrants could make their way as flexible workers, with fewer rights and obligations towards housing and employers. This makes them more mobile than indigenous populations.

Stranded migration outside Europe

Although many sub-Saharan Africans manage to enter Europe, it is important to note that many others, with the same aspirations and dreams get stuck in perceived transit areas, at least for a considerable period of time. At the times of the interviews, the average ‘waiting period’ for the 35 respondents in Morocco was 30 months, with some exceptional cases of migrants staying there (involuntarily) for more

¹¹ This information is gained with the help of numerous brief social talks which are not included in table 1.

than seven years. Due to social pressures¹² the majority does not return home. This status of immobility may lead to frustrating situations as a Congolese migrant explained:

We are stuck between the desert and the sea. We cannot go home, and we cannot move forward... And here [in Morocco] we live in a hostile environment, they treat us like prisoners.

Over time this frustration may turn into acceptance and hence, as outlined before, some migrants build up their lives in perceived transit areas leading to a long-term stay. This is indicated by an interview section with a Nigerian migrant who is living in Morocco for nine years, he said:

R: In my mind I still want to go to Europe, that is my project. If I have enough money I will try it again but I never risk my life for that. And I am serious when I tell you that I have a good life here at the moment, it is my home now. You know, home is home, wherever you are... If somebody told me 6 years ago that Morocco is becoming like this, I would have laughed. But now, the security has improved, there are some job opportunities and we are free to move.

I: What do you mean by free to move?

R: Well, I am an illegal immigrant you know, I don't have the right papers to be here. Five years ago they controlled me all the time, I got arrested and so on. We even didn't go out of our houses, the street was too dangerous because of the police controls. Now, the situation has changed. Do you see my barber shop? I am sitting here the whole day, 6 days a week. The police knows that, they know me. But they just let me do my job. That is what I meant with the situation has improved, not a bit, but very much!

This interview section underpins the earlier notion that migrants living in transit have multilayered opportunities. While going to Europe is still an option, it is quite unlikely that this respondent will undertake this journey since he is socially and economically embedded in his perceived transit area. This indicates that, similar to 'the myth of return' emphasizing that migrants have always the idea of returning 'home' one day but are unlikely to take this step, there is also a 'myth

¹² Many migrants start migrating 'as pioneers' of the family or community (because of the collective decision making process in the pre-migration phase). Consequently, migrants are expected to send money back home as soon as possible. This creates a tense situation in which migrants face their sense of responsibility and the limited economic possibilities at the same time. Return migration is generally perceived as social failure.

of transit': The longer people remain in transit, the more they become immigrants.

Conclusions from a mobility perspective

Although stepwise migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe is rather specific; it concerns migrants often lacking the possibility of going directly to Europe, it illustrates that migration is not always a simple matter of leaving one country and going to another. It shows that there often is not one rational plan; aspirations change affecting routes and contemplated destinations. This makes migration often open ended, or in Skeldon's (1997) words: migration never becomes permanent. Because migration projects are rather formulated in abstract ways, the related goals are moving targets. This may not only turn migrants from settlers into sojourners, it also places different migrations in a continuum. Different migrations (rural-urban, regional and inter-continental) are often described as separate phenomena. This study indicates that these phenomena are often linked. What once has started as internal migration may turn into inter-continental migration in the near future, changing the social and political perspective completely.

It is also suggested here that we should go beyond the analytical focus of collective decisions as decisive for migration. During the process of moving numerous decisions are made by migrants without any family consultancy. These social linkages with families and communities 'at home' are highly important for migrants in terms of financing and mental support, but migrants need also the help of third persons in order to overcome difficulties during their journeys. This turns social networks into hybrid networks. Although there is a general bias in migration research on the importance of transnational networks, locally based networks are also important, in particular for migrants seeking some kind of protection in transit places.

What is also clear from the above analysis is the fact that migration does not merely contain mobility. The majority of migrants in this research would be labelled as 'unwanted' by European policy makers. As a result, these migrants increasingly get immobilized since legal channels to enter Europe are scarce and border controls are intensified. The selective bordering practices seem to result in a mobility gap (comparable with the digital divide) between the global North and the South (Turner 2007). Hence mobility becomes indeed one of the most

important stratifying factors of the globalized world (Bauman 1998). At the ground this indeed means that many migrants are forced to wait in Euro-African borderlands for an indefinite period of time.

Finally, the combination of stranded migration with the earlier outlined onward mobility, suggests that altogether traditional dichotomies of migration (temporary vs. permanent, movement vs. settlement) can no longer be taken for granted in contemporary research on African migration. Indeed, there is much to win in migration studies when the analytical focus is not only on the beginning and ending stages of migration, but also on the in between, the movement. In fact, recent authors, such as John Urry, extend this issue to social science in general. In his attempt to establish a mobility paradigm he argues that a 'movement-driven social science in which movement, potential movement and blocked movement are all conceptualized as constitutive of economic, social and political relations' will bring "to the fore theories, methods and exemplars of research that so far have been mostly out of sight' (Urry 2006: 43). It is time for migration studies to be a discipline to acknowledge that mobility is an integral part of human, at least migrant, lives with important dynamics and specific spatialities.

Places of mobility and mobile places

Having elaborated on the non-linear character of migration, here the spatial outcome of stepwise migration is discussed. The importance of *en route places* is analyzed on three different levels: the city level (migration hubs), neighbourhood level (within migration hubs) and migrants' informal camps outside the urban context.

Migration hubs can be described as places where migrants go to in order to finance and organize their next step of their journeys. One of the most important migration hubs deeper in Africa are, Kano (Nigeria), Gao (Mali) Agadez (Niger) Tamanrasset (Algeria) and Sabha (Libya). Closer to Europe, Laayoune (Western Sahara), Rabat, Oujda (Morocco), Maghnia (Algeria) and Tripoli (Libya) are places where a lot of sub-Saharan African transit migrants go to. Traditionally, Istanbul is such an important 'hub' for people coming from the Middle East, the former Soviet Union and Asia. Nowadays, sub-Saharan African migrants can be added to this list.

As stated in the introduction, migrants have a considerable economic and social impact on these places, especially on the places along trans-Saharan routes. At the same time, these places are of great importance

for migrant's journeys as well; usually there is some work available and, more importantly there is often a 'migration facilitating industry'. In these hubs, businesses have emerged facilitating the accommodation and journeys of migrants heading North. Moreover, communication facilitations have been set up, such as money transfer agencies, telephone shops and internet cafes, giving migrants the opportunity to seek for support or to contact their relatives and brokers (see also Lahlou 2007; van Moppes and Schapendonk 2007). It is important to emphasize here that most of the migration facilitating activities are *not* crime-related activities. Migration creates businesses which contribute to local economic developments. The internet cafes around the University of Oujda are day-in day-out filled with sub-Saharan Africans. The telephone shops in Aksaray and Tarlabasi (quarters in Istanbul) make advertisements with flags of many East *and* West African countries. Moreover, in the case of African overland routes, the transportation of undocumented migrants across borders is often viewed by the local population as a normal and informal economic activity rather than a serious criminal act. There has been trans-Saharan mobility for ages. In fact some local governments and authority agents even profit economically from the transportation of these (undocumented) migrants through a system of 'transit taxes' (Bensaad 2007). Thus, certain places attract migrants because of the favourable infrastructure and, at the same time, local actors benefit from the presence of temporary migrants. However, the migration industry is rather fragmented and locally based consisting predominantly of small entrepreneurs. This coincides with former researches emphasizing that the organization of migration in Africa, in contrary to what is often believed by policy-makers, lacks any form of international coordination (Brachet 2005; Collyer 2006b; Hamood 2006; de Haas 2007). Due to the step-wise character, it is mainly the African migrant who is linking up different migration actors.

Where certain cities attract migrants on migration routes, certain neighbourhoods within the boundaries of the city are important places for migrants to go to. These places are, most of the time, already inhabited by 'mobile populations'. In Tamanrasset, sub-Saharan Africans live with the Tuaregs (Bensaad 2007), in Istanbul they find places where Kurds and people from the former Soviet Union reside, and in Rabat black Africans live in places where traditionally Moroccan internal migrants go to (Alioua 2003). Interestingly, different black African

communities have different neighbourhoods to go to; the neighbourhoods are segregated along national and/or ethnic lines. In Istanbul, for instance, Taksim and Tarlebasi¹³ are mainly inhabited by Nigerians while most people from Sudan and Somalia reside in Kumkapi and many Senegalese live in Aksaray.¹⁴ In Rabat a similar process of segregation occurs; generally Ghanaians and Nigerians live in Taqadoum (a traditional *biddonville* south of the city), Congolese go to Hay Nahda I and Souissi (neighbouring Taqadoum) where also many Malians live. The communities in these quarters are highly dynamic since people come and go on almost a daily basis; these are the *places of mobility*. In these places of mobility rooms/apartments are shared by a number of migrants. Moreover the rooms are often merely equipped by a simple mattress and a gas burner. As a Nigerian migrant in Istanbul commented while I visited his apartment: “*This room is designed to move again*”. Migrants find these rooms/apartments/places not only by transnational social networks but they often learn *en route* where compatriots are residing, which places they should avoid and where some jobs are available. This information is mainly spread by the spontaneous social and locally-based networks described above.

Although social networks are highly important for explaining the creation of migration hubs and migrant places, the particularities of specific places are of similar importance. Besides the presence of migration facilitating businesses, mentioned above, local informal labour markets and (inter)national protection mechanisms are also place-bounded factors. For instance, many migrants stated to prefer staying in Rabat instead of other major cities in Morocco (Casablanca, Marrakech, Fez etc.) since in Rabat (inter)national media, NGOs and diplomatic institutions were present (see also Alioua 2003). This provides at least some sort of institutional protection. Some respondents in Turkey stated to prefer residing in Istanbul because of the cosmopolitan character of the city, as one Burundian migrant stated:

I have been to Ankara... pfff... Ankara, there they are not used to strangers. You cannot find one single African person in the streets there. It is impossible! There are no tourists, no immigrants, nothing! So I left that place. The people are just looking at you! They think that you are less or

¹³ Two quarters near the city centre (Taksim Square).

¹⁴ Kumkapi and Aksaray are relatively far located from Taksim Square.

something, I don't know. That is why I came here, Istanbul is open to the world... I know that many Africans have problems with the police, but I still think that this is the best city to live in, we have good churches here, some organizations that help us and most people here, they have open minds.

Thus, some places have characteristics in favour of (undocumented) sub-Saharan African migrants. A specific example is the University campus of Oujda providing particular protection mechanisms for African migrants. On this campus there is an informal migrant camp with approximately 200–300 inhabitants from sub-Saharan Africa. Migrants have 'settled' there since this campus is a traditional no-go-area for the police (due to student protest in the past). Nowadays, the camp is highly organized by an informal political system of chairmen. Each 'national community' has its own spokesmen for general issues, e.g. security and economic business (Schapendonk 2008).

Urban locations, however, are not the only places of protection. One of migrants' strategies in order to avoid confrontations with security agents is to hide from them. Numerous informal camps of sub-Saharan Africa emerged in Morocco, Algeria and Libya (CIMADE 2004), mostly in forests. These are what the American phenomenologist Edward Casey would call "antiresidential" spaces with "implacable landscape logic" (Casey 1993: 193). Many migrants, however, do reside there; emplace them with their improvised tents, cooking places, churches and mosques. These *mobile tranquilos*¹⁵ are also strictly organized along ethnic lines. In the Moroccan-Algerian border area (near Oujda), for instance, there are several camps generally consisting of a group of between 10 to 35 people. These camps are located from each other with a considerable distance and move to other locations regularly; the people remain the same (although with high in- and out-flows), the structure of tents remain the same, the possessions remain the same, only the location changes; these are the *mobile places* so-called transit migrants live in.

Although these camps are located outside the usual public spaces of society, they are not completely isolated. Due to technological developments migrants in the most remote areas may also be connected to networks often transcending national borders. Therefore migrants in

¹⁵ It is meaningful that migrants use a Spanish word to indicate their camps. *Tranquilo* refers to a 'resting-place.'

the forests stay in contact with other migrants in cities and different countries, (inter)national NGOs and media (see also Collyer 2007). In case of deportations or other security threats,¹⁶ many of these actors are contacted and activated by migrants in order to find forms of protection.

Non-places *and* places-to-be

The described migrant places are increasingly labeled as *non-places* according to Augé's indication of places of supermodernity (Augé 1995). The argument is that migrants and refugees, as unwelcome newcomers, are determinedly placed outside the normal societal geographies and therefore live in *non-places* (Davidson 2003) or *nowhere-places* (Bauman 2004). Here the labeling of migrant places as *non-places*, including migrant places created by authorities (detention centers, refugee camps), is rejected for several reasons.

Firstly, the denial of places is a direct denial of the people living in these places and consequently the denial of interactions, friendships, songs, writings, work and stories occurring in these places. In the case of refugee camps, the denial of people's places is inappropriate and extra sensitive since all asylum seekers and (potential) refugees are seeking political protection of which recognition is the first step. The denial of their temporary places is therefore one step backwards. The label *non-place* for detention camps is also ethically objectionable since these places are completely closed for the outside world. Exactly for this reason we need, from a humanitarian point of view, to emphasize the presence of these camps and therefore erase the '*non*' connected to the detention centers.

Secondly, in the case of camps informally set up by migrants themselves, the indication *non-place* undermines the agency of migrants. The place-making and territoriality of migrants in so-called transit spaces require a form of self-determination; people need agency to make themselves invisible for the authorities. These places are based on a collective territoriality mixing the identity of adventurers with fear and otherness (Brachet 2005). It is a general misconception that 'migrants

¹⁶ Moroccan authorities execute large scale control operations on a regular basis. It is reported that migrants are sometimes deported to Algeria, from where they often enter Morocco again, usually by feet.

in transit' located in forests live there because they are excluded; it is often the case that they exclude themselves. As a migrant from Cameroon who has lived several months in the forest, answered to the question why he was not living in a city like Rabat:

I have been in Rabat for four days. But you know, the situation is good there, I know; you can have a house, there are some jobs and you have a nice bed to sleep in. But there is one important thing I hate about that place. People forget where they are going to. They forget about Europe, they forget about their dreams and they lose their spirit. I prefer to stay here. Why? Because everyday when I wake up I realize that I have to go. Look around you this is not a place to stay! And that is why I am here.

Altogether, migrant's places in transit areas, be it in forests or in major cities, are of vital importance for migrants to 1) find protection, 2) build up social contacts and 3) organize eventually the next step of their journey. They are therefore rather *places-to-be* with broader impacts, than excised *non-places*. These broader impacts of migrant presence and the creation of new migrant places change cities, quarters, border areas, political relations and social spaces. The heightening of the fences around Ceuta and Melilla after migrants' attempts to enter the European exclaves is a political example with morphological consequences. In a cultural sense, there is a noticeable revival of Christianity in Morocco (see also Bensaad 2007); churches in major cities are predominantly filled with migrants, notably black African communities seeking spiritual and social protection. In Istanbul the first mixed marriages are visible between mainly black African men and modern Turkish women and the presence of sub-Saharan Africans brings along interesting interactions with Turkish and Kurdish populations.

All these factors described here, indicate that indeed the specificity of places is not constructed out of "a long introverted history" but 'out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus' (Massey 1994: 154). Migrants give meaning to places, and places function as coordinates for migrants in the process of migration (see also de Bruijn, van Dijk and van Dijk 2001). Thus places and mobility are bounded by reciprocity; places direct mobilities and mobilities shape places. Or in the words of Casey (1993: 289): 'If being on a journey is to be in or among places, to be in a place is to be capable of journeying.' This reciprocity has broader impacts; it re-shapes Africa, as it is described in the concluding section below.

Changing mobilities, shaping Africa

As we have seen, many sub-Saharan African migrants have stepwise migration journeys affecting thereby several places with their presence. These migrations occur in the context of growing migration aspirations, but closing borders. Consequently, there is an accumulation of sub-Saharan would-be immigrants in transit areas (mainly in the Mediterranean region). Nowadays, this accumulation of potential 'unwanted immigrants' is a highly debated topic providing transit states favorable negotiation position with regard to lucrative migration deals with European partners (Adepoju et al. 2007). Thus migrations shape international politics. One step further, sub-Saharan African states are also increasingly involved in migration and development deals. European states offer African 'partners' development aid in exchange for cooperation on migration control. This has changed the aim of migration regimes from the prevention of migrants *entering* a particular state, to the attempt of keeping people from *exiting* a specific country of origin. The fact that European border guards are involved in the surveillance of the Senegalese coastline strengthens the notion of an 'enclave society' in which globalization for many people means social closure instead of social openness (Turner 2007).

However, contemporary stepwise migration towards Europe brings along not only political changes, it also changes African transnational spaces and relations. Migrants are going to relatively unfamiliar places hoping they are able to enter Europe from there. Sub-Saharan Africans are increasingly found in Istanbul (Brewer and Yüксеker 2006) Ukraine (Uehling 2004) and other Eastern European countries. This re-directs transnational inter- and transactions and facilitates new transnational relations. In Istanbul for instance, many African (transit) migrants act as 'guides' for African businessmen directing them to import-export markets, arrange accommodations and interpreters. This shows that migration is often embedded in and a forerunner for larger international developments. This may create bottom-up forces reducing again the same notion of an enclave society.

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RESHAPING CONGOLESE STATEHOOD IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS AND TRANSITION

Timothy Raeymaekers and Koen Vlassenroot

*Introduction*¹

In 1965, the American scholar Crawford Young observed that the primary challenge to the student of Congolese politics was to identify Congo's developing political system within the constant "change and flux" of emergent patterns of politics (Young 1965: 607). Forty three years later, contemporary Congolese students are confronted with a looming paradox. While on the one hand, the country is systematically portrayed as the epitome of African state collapse—'a forsaken black hole characterized by calamity, chaos, confusion' (Trefon 2004)—on the other hand the Congolese state has shown a remarkable propensity for resilience. According to Pierre Englebert:

...state weakness, foreign invasions, the exploitation of its natural resources by transnational and informal networks, and the multiplicity of domestic rebellions linked to foreign interests have not managed to dent, however slightly, the generalized support that exists for the reproduction of the Congolese state among its elites and regular citizens, foreign political and economic interests, and the international community at large (Englebert 2003: 2).

Observing that in many parts of Congo, local grievances against the state and the greed of political elites have been magnified by the circumstances of war and political turmoil, the author takes as paradoxical the continued broadly unchallenged existence of Congo as a unified legitimate state.

One of the potential answers might at least lay in its international support. Over the past one and a half decade, the international community—particularly the European and African Unions—has intensively invested into rebuilding and reshaping state organisations in a

¹ The following chapter is an elaboration of a previous article by one of the co-authors (Timothy Raeymaekers) with the title 'Sharing the Spoils. The Reinvigoration of Congo's political System', *Politorbis* 42 (October 2007).

country destructed by decades of war and economic predation. The main model to reconstruct political power has been political power-sharing: through a formula of broad political collaboration between former military opponents, international donors hope to force a political transition that officially re-opens the country for external markets and consolidates participatory democratic reform. Instead of building a strong sovereign state, however, this strategy appears to have contributed to a different state model, characterised by a partial return to patrimonial politics while at the same time fostering different levels of institutional “mediation” (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2005). In this developing post-conflict setting, therefore, the Congolese state seems to have gradually lost its capacity as lame Leviathan (Callaghy 1984) in favour of a plurality of alliances and systems of regulation between economic agents, armed actors and local authorities that partially stand in opposition and partially collaborate with state agencies. Still, this apparent displacement of state sovereignty to non-state spaces and institutions has not been a unilinear process. As Englebert sustains, Congolese nation-statehood has also effectively been projected and sustained by agencies that practically detract it from its main sources of income and authority.² Rather than eliminating the state as such, the systems of power that determine access to positions and resources outside the immediate perimeters of the state are often as complicit and collaborative with state power as they are competitive and antagonistic to it (Roitman 2005). Similarly, ordinary citizens also continue to maintain a strong image of the Congolese nation-state during times of political crisis and turmoil, particularly in antagonism with foreign or external “intruders” that are believed to besiege their livelihood systems and exploit Congo’s vast reservoirs of natural resources.

After years of war and destitution, this image of a strong and leading Central African nation is progressively disconnected from the realities of public authority implementation, however: while the first continues to be transformed through sub- and transnational objections, the second progressively drives the middle ground between formal and informal, state and non-state spheres of regulation divided

² In this context, the concept of authority refers to the ability to place action and practices into a meaningful social frame or context, that is, to subject something or somebody to the operation of a system of meaning, significance, institutionalization and power (Latham 2003). We will come back to this concept later in the chapter.

between different, and often antagonistic, agencies and institutions. From a lame Leviathan that tried to impose its encompassing image and authority, Congo is rapidly moving toward a “mediated” form of statehood, which makes it look more like its Somalian or North Kenyan counterparts in Eastern Africa (Menkhaus 2006) than like the authoritarian systems of Sudan or Zimbabwe. Bearing this in mind, the Congolese experience can possibly give us some useful insights into the potential deadlocks of contemporary interventions in so-called “collapsed” African states, which increasingly fall victim to their own blueprints imposed on extremely complex situations.

This chapter proposes an explanation for the gradual commodification of Congolese sovereignty among different forms of cooperation and conflict, produced by a variety of types of institutions and agents. In a first section, an introduction will be given to the emergence of authoritarianism and its gradual collapse under President Désiré Mobutu, whom for a long time succeeded in imposing his dictatorial over Congo’s fragmented society. A second section will discuss the period of regionalized civil war in Africa’s Great Lakes region, which started with the conquest of Congo’s capital Kinshasa by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, and ended with the signing of a ceasefire agreement between different antagonist strongmen. Part of this section will discuss the various transformations that occurred to Congo’s political constellations during the war. A next part of this section will explain how these transformations increasingly collided with the international project of “transition” introduced as the main resolution strategy towards the ongoing Congolese conflict. Finally, within the scope of this volume, a reflection will also have to be made as to the various types of re-scaling and re-shaping of Congolese politics in the post-Cold War order, which have included processes of growing regionalisation, transnationalisation but also localisation and civil and ethnic nationalism. In line with the editors of this volume, it will be argued that the growing erosion of state authority in different governable spaces in contemporary Congo does not have to preclude its persistence in terms of images and nationhood. As the Congolese often have it: “l’etat est moribond, mais pas mort (the state is dying, but not dead)” (Trefon 2007).

From Authoritarianism To The Archipelago State

Whether today or in a distant past, Congo continues to invoke images of a sinister Heart of Darkness. Referring to Joseph Conrad's grim representation of the Congo River in the beginning of the 20th century, these images have included references to "vampire" and "dinosaur" statehood" (Braeckman 1992), state failure, collapse and finally disintegration (Lemarchand 2001). In her book 'In the Footsteps of Mr Kurtz', the British journalist Michela Wrong tries to offer a more balanced interpretation of Congolese politics by arguing that Mobutu's absolutist rule reflected in many ways the principles of colonial statehood without, however, copying them completely in terms of political culture. In fact, the transfer of formal political power from the colonial powers to the Congo Republic induced a thorough weakening in the "sinews" of the country's political structures (Schatzberg 1988): during the early 1960s, the colonial system of forced labour and exploitation was rapidly exchanged for an episode of brutal political turmoil, in which the different opposing forces of anti-colonial strife stood against each other. This would all come to an end in 1965, when Marshal Désiré Mobutu came to power. Mobutu's political consolidation was based on two distinct strategies. First, he systematically exterminated the nationalist leaders that had pulled forward Congo's independence. In 1961, Congo's firstly elected president Patrice Lumumba had already been killed by a death squad ordered by Mobutu with covert international support (De Witte 1999). In 1965, the leader of the 1964–65 rebellion, Pierre Mulele, experienced the same fate: he was lured from exile with an amnesty promise, and then tortured to death by Mobutu's soldiers.

The killing of Mulele and Lumumba meant a new and shadowy start for Central Africa. After having changed the constitution with great popular support, Mobutu changed his country's name to Zaire in 1971, and quickly replaced the old nationalist leaders with "sycophants that were ready to say whatever they thought their leader would want to hear" (Wrong 2000). His second strategy consisted of the erection of an "absolutist" model of political control, characterised by a single authority figure at the head of a bureaucratic governmental structure (Willame 1972: 129). Unlike Max Weber's depersonalised notion of bureaucratism, however, Mobutu's personalised rule was characterised by a deep distrust of the political sphere, which he essentially saw as corrupt, unstable and irrational. Instead, the new pillars of the post-colonial regime were to become the army and state bureaucracy, both

of which had to counter the ambitions and exigencies of the emerging political class and opposition.

A Decentralized Centralized State

To control Zaire's complex and fragmented society, a "cover over" strategy was implemented, which meant placing a new type of state cadre with material and ideal interests that were relatively congruent with those of "the centre on top of existent intermediary authority structures" (Callaghy 1984: 143). As Thomas Callaghy observes, however, the introduction of authoritarianism in Zaire resulted not from the high levels of authority and legitimacy enjoyed by the post-colonial state, but rather from the absence of it (*Ibid.* 32; see above Zolberg 1966). Mobutu's authority had to be fought over with other groups and organizations that very often had different interests and ideas of how to rule this highly fragmented society. In a country with over 300 communities and languages, and with the size of half a continent, the result was that various parallel, non-state authorities continued to exist which often maintained a sizable degree of autonomy, especially within the vast uncontrolled spaces in the geographical interior and periphery. Rather than peripheries, it might be better to speak about governable spaces, however, which suggests a more interdependent configuration of territory, identity, and rule (Rose 1999). In the words of Gledhill, the state and non-state forms of regulation that emerged in the post-colonial era should not be seen as bounded, independent forms of political organisation, but rather as interrelated and interdependent parts of a single, dynamic process of configuration and refiguration (Gledhill 1994: 13; Arnaut and Hojbjerg 2008 forthcoming). In historical terms, the erection of prefectural rule in post-colonial Congo seemed to confirm very well Tocqueville's statement about the French absolutist state, where centralist rule was established *among* the ancient powers, without, however, destroying them. Contrary to the "corporatist" states of South America, where parallel social forces were directly integrated into the central corridors of power (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986), Zaire's political system had to take account of the continued viability of more localised forms of territory, identity and rule, which resulted in part from the permanent relevance of ethnicity as a source of social identification. According to Callaghy (1984: 62), there were "traditional, quasi-traditional, and transitional local authorities and groups to deal with, all in the context of intricate patterns of local factionalism produced by the interplay of identity and utility and

the patron-client and brokerage networks that frequently link the local area with higher levels.” This “bifurcated” nature of Congo’s political rule (Mamdani 1996) reflected at once the essence of Zairian politics and society, which showed a tendency for concessions and mediation rather than the abolishment of pre-existing societal structures. The subsequent struggle that erupted between these different systems of power could not simply be categorised among “traditional-modern” or “formal-informal” lines, but involved a combination of central patrimonial and dispersed parallel authorities that were engaged in a perennial search for societal and political control. The crucial and, in some ways, paradoxical difference with pre-colonial rule was that the post-colonial state was defined and supported not so much by its internal conditions but rather by the international regime of sovereign states: lacking the conditions for empirical statehood, a “parody of statehood” emerged which, according to Young (1984), indicated a pervasive incompetence, deflated credibility, and systematized corruption among the state’s ruling elites. Others prefer to use the term “lame Leviathan”: like a giant standing on trembling feet, the emerging Zairian state had to struggle simultaneously on internal and external fronts in its search for sovereignty. Continually coping with the fact that all three of the major elements of domination—an administrative apparatus, legitimacy doctrines, and internal and external coalitions—were inherently unstable and problematic, the possibility of failure remained eternally present (Callaghy 1984: 87).

The dialectic relationship between regime insecurity and the economic scarcity that characterized the Zairian state ultimately led to a situation in which state-led oppression seemed the only alternative to a regime collapse. As the personal, political, and economic insecurity of the regime increased, the exponents of central political power gradually sought to accumulate resources as quickly as possible from those who occupied contextually inferior positions in the political hierarchy. According to Michael Schatzberg, a “dialectic of oppression” ensued as people on top of the political hierarchy felt obliged to accumulate resources as quickly as possible from those who occupied contextually inferior positions. However, as the resources available to the state were gradually depleted (and this would be increasingly the case from the 1970s onwards: cf. *infra*), the result was very often “still more oppression, personal insecurity and—over the long term—new sources of instability and insecurity for both the regime and state” (Schatzberg 1988: 3–4). During Mobutu’s rule, state services like the

Sûreté d'état, the Jeunesse du MPR and the Forces Armées Zairoises (FAZ) became increasingly active in the extortion and terrorising of the civilian population, which resulted in the population seeing their army essentially as a foreign occupation force. Much like their colonial predecessor of the Force Publique, the FAZ were essentially an authoritarian army, whose abysmal record of human rights violations was amongst the most voluminous in post-colonial Africa.

On the one hand, Mobutu appeared to succeed quite successfully in imposing his dictatorial mode of rule. One of the methods to nibble away power from more localised forms of authority, for example was to appoint customary authorities as members of the single party Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR). The simultaneous destruction of intermediary authorities and the oppression of independent political association created a vast gulf between government and subjects, which made effective political opposition impossible at worst, and foolhardy at best (Schatzberg 1988: 140; Callaghy 1984: 423). On the other hand, however, Mobutu did not completely succeed in eliminating his country's tendency towards decentralisation. The fact that even the centralised coercive apparatus continued to operate rather independently in the state's margins, suggested quite a different reality than broad-based populism. Not forming part of the president's distributional strategies, the state's implementers in the streets (army soldiers, police officers, mayors, local administrators, etc.) were more or less forced to scrounge an income for themselves in the zones they were meant to submit to authoritarian rule. The result was often a high level of complicity and collaboration between extorting state authorities and other, more localised forms of power and regulation which the state theoretically had to incorporate and object.

Father of a Nation

To face the difficult task of governing Congo's diverse populations and at the same time resist regime collapse, Mobutu introduced a strategy many European and African leaders had tried before him: the manipulation of national belonging. From an economic point of view, Mobutu's Zaire experienced great problems in building viable industries and resist the continuing implication of the West, partly because of its high dependence on raw resource exports. Although benefiting from it in terms of extraversion strategies, this natural resource curse severely blocked Mobutu in consolidating his national rule. In 1973,

therefore, Mobutu introduced a series of measures that simultaneously were to nationalise Zaire's economy and consolidate his personalised rule. One radical measure, for example, consisted of the transfer of all foreign-owned firms to the directorship of a Zairian citizen. The net result of this '*Zairianisation*', however, was a massive take-over by state-appointed entrepreneurs that were both incapable and unwilling to lead these nationalised firms in an economically viable way. Within this context of growing economic nationalism, an interesting paradox arose, in which the nationalisation of the economy gradually led to the privatisation of state structures. On the one hand, the introduction of Zairianisation completely toppled the economic logic, because instead of concentrating on productivity, enterprises now could get higher returns by lobbying privileges and protection from the state. On the other hand, the transformation of state-run enterprises into the milking-cows of national politicians led to the concentration of capital in the hands of a restricted, state-centred elite. As a result, politicians, industrial leaders and private conglomerates gradually transformed the Zairian state into "mafia-like enterprise", which abused all its power to enrich itself to the disadvantage of the population (De Herdt and Marysse 1996: 29).

At the same time, however, this blatant reality of state predation was purposively challenged by Mobutu's propaganda machine, which disseminated a national ideology based on the sanctification of his personalised rule. While administrators, police officers and ordinary citizens were busy fending for themselves, the illusion of political participation in Zaire was maintained through the single-party MPR, which involved something of a political "religion" (Callaghy 1984: 319). Erected in the first place to glorify the role of Mobutu Seko Seko, the MPR regularly relied on popular appeals to support its exalted state ideology (Willame 1972). In its widely acclaimed speeches and popular meetings, Mobutu was systematically portrayed as the symbolic locus of authority and identity; while his personal charisma became glorified in an extravagant personal cult expressed in titles like "the Great Helmsman" and "the Father of the Nation". Mobutu's charisma was probably best expressed by a Zairian student at the time, who said that:

... whenever a new popular rally was announced, in which '*Papa*' would present one of his most recent speeches, I would go unwillingly, because I did not approve of Mobutu. But as soon as he begun speaking, we

would be swept away. We'd stand in the sun for hours, but the time would slip by without you noticing. If you study those speeches now, in the cold light of day, you can see there was almost nothing in them; they were full of inconsistencies, gossip and tittle-tattle. But he knew just how to speak to the people. He would tell us nonsense and we would believe him (Wrong, 2000: 89).

Besides the evident privatisation of Zairian statehood in terms of daily predation and corruption, this glorifying element probably did a lot for Zairians to cling on to their besieged nation-state. Partly responding to the humiliation of decolonisation, Zairians finally started to develop their own version of African nationalism in the expression of authenticity and '*citoyenneté*', which directly attacked the colonial statutes of civility. As Wrong rightly suggests, this ability of Mobutu to constantly play on the Zairian masses probably remains the greatest mystery of this African leader that no political analysis has ever resolved.

Islands of Sovereignty

By the early 1980s, Mobutu's model of nationalist authoritarianism finally collapsed under a thundering economic and political crisis. While the global oil shock plunged the world into a deep economic recession, Mobutu's economic measures increasingly proved a recipe for disaster. During the mid-1970s and 1980s, inflation rose to spectacular levels, which caused a massive capital flight and a complete dollarisation of the economy. Especially in the east of the country, the Zairian currency was increasingly refuted and exchanged for dollars or gold. In the meantime in the capital Kinshasa, public officials were not being paid for months, and the state increasingly lost its capacity to provide a minimum of social services to its citizens. Logically, then, the post-Zairianisation period witnessed the largest expansion of unofficial economic activity since colonial independence (Vwakyanakazi 1982: 177). Underpaid officials, hospital workers, unemployed factory personnel and impoverished peasants all threw themselves into the booming activities of selling household necessities or driving taxis in the midst of withering officialdom. Congolese usually refer to this system as '*Système D*', or '*la débrouille*', which literally means "to fend for oneself". As if to appease the boiling cradle Zairian society had become, Mobutu's answer to his country's survival economy was to call for '*Débrouillez-vous!*'—in other words: "fend for yourself" and God will provide for the nation. In his broadly disseminated speeches,

he increasingly called upon the population to secure incomes for themselves, as the state was no longer able to provide wealth, security and representation for its citizens. The net result of this officially induced privatisation was that “informality” gradually became the characteristic of the total of economic activity—not only the popular survival economy of the poor and impoverished, but also of the abandoned public officials and military that now had to scrounge their incomes for themselves. As MacGaffey, Roitman and others have assert before us, this terminology of “informal” exchange decreasingly covered the meaning of real economic activity in this part of Central Africa, because agents often had their feet firmly planted in both the formal and informal spheres. Rather than seeing these spheres as two opposed alternatives in which one has to engage and disengage, it is more fruitful to describe them as part of a single system of productive relationships, in which agents disperse risks by balancing alternative types of resources. In light of this observation, some went even as far as seeing in ‘*Système D*’ an alternative social contract between citizens and the state: in return for the state’s retirement from public life, citizens were left the possibility to act unlawfully—or in the words of MacGaffey, to engage in acts that were more or less illegal, inadmissible (Jourdan 2004; MacGaffey 1991).

While the term contract is probably exaggerated, the many associations, networks and temporary alliances that emerged in the sphere of ‘*Système D*’ still proved to be well-suited to making collective and individual demands on the bureaucratic apparatus. Immediately outside closed presidential circles, the Zairian state in fact remained an extremely fluid and contextual entity, whose shape and configuration were constantly changing according to the three-way struggle that characterized its historical shape and existence. Toward the 1990s, the constant interaction between administration, military and “informal” platforms of exchange gradually started to form new institutions and equilibria that made the classic state-society dichotomy so much discussed in academic literature look increasingly futile and useless. As the Cold War ended, it became evident that the Zairian state was losing its capacity of lame Leviathan in favour of a different model or regime, in which the state played an increasingly marginal role both as image and as public authority. Callaghy proposed the term “archipelago statehood” to identify the “group of islands of control and extraction which kept the stumbling system alive by focusing on the most

easily profitable forms and locations of resources pillage” (Callaghy 2001: 109).

In hindsight, this gradual narrowing or reshaping of Zairian statehood in the immediate post-Cold war era generated two apparently opposed tendencies but which really were mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, the gradual loss of territorial authority from the part of centralizing state agencies necessarily made state rule become more contracted rather than diffused or encompassing: because it concentrated mostly on “islands” of extraction and control, it left their initial objective of diffusing power over society and a national territory at large. The more the state contracted, the less its public authority was expressed through mass meetings, speeches and government buildings, but instead found a new formulation in government checkpoints, military roadblocks and commercial exit points which were subject to a constant bargaining process between the occupiers and defiants of state authority. Eventually, this process would lead to a splintering of state power along particularistic economic and political interests.

On the other hand, however, state erosion in Zaire was not a unilinear process, but rather a combination of effective contraction in the state’s heartland with an expansion of different power configurations in the borderlands. To the extent that such areas offered a potential for transborder enterprise, extra-legal arrangements and livelihoods for fending state officials, these border areas also generated new frontiers of wealth and power accumulation that eventually transformed the state and its sovereign, territorial constellation. This became mostly evident in the country’s border areas, where some of the country’s most valuable resources were situated. In North Kivu for example, on the border with Rwanda and Uganda, Zairianisation stimulated a reciprocal assimilation (Bayart et al. 1999) between local customary chiefs, corrupt administrators and private landlords that started to autonomously accumulate wealth and political status outside official or ‘shadow state’ networks. The announcement of a radical land reform by Mobutu in the late 1960s-early 1970s, for example, favoured the large-scale appropriation of vacant land by a small but increasingly powerful rural capitalist class, which used its connections to the public administration to manipulate the attribution of land ownership to their own benefit. Most of these new landowners were from Rwandan-speaking origin, which would generate serious dissensions in the following decade (cf. *infra*). During the 1980s, this local corruption of

national land reform contributed to increased poverty and conflict among North Kivu's landless farmers who had fallen victim to mass disappropriations. While some found a second income in informal commerce, others—especially male, marginalized youngsters—became an easy prey for mobilisation by violent political entrepreneurs that aimed to carve out a political space to the disadvantage of withdrawing statist power.³ To the same token, the increasing “informalisation” of the economy during the 1980s and 1990s stimulated a deepening privatization of the state in the sector of mining and cross border commerce. While the practical liberalisation of the minerals and cross border trade during the early 1990s permitted some leading businessmen to consolidate their transnational trust networks, some also sought the active participation of state agencies (such as the military, state administrators or underpaid customs agents) in the protection of their high-value and high-risk transactions. At the Congo-Ugandan border, for example, the growing liberalisation of unofficial minerals and cross border trade stimulated the emergence of a checkpoint economy, in which private, mafia-like protection formed object of a constant bargaining process between transnational smugglers-entrepreneurs, renegade customs officials and marauding militias that had been operating in the region since colonial independence.⁴ Toward the mid-1990s, this emerging power complex would increasingly be coupled to a more regionalized agenda of political power and capital accumulation that eventually spurred the first Congolese war (cf. *infra*).⁵

To conclude, the gradual contraction of Zairian statehood in its principal domains did not necessarily lead to complete state “collapse”, as it is intended in classic, state-centred analysis. As Janet Roitman suggests, such “novel” arrangements that arise in the sphere of unofficial political and economic exchange do not necessarily proclaim the demise of the nation-state, since state agencies and institutions often

³ The present study does not permit a detailed analysis of the land question in Eastern Congo/Zaire. For a more detailed discussion of this question, as well as the political impact hereof, see Mathieu and Mafikiri (1999), Vlassenroot (2004) as well as Vlassenroot and Huggins (2005).

⁴ For more details see Raeymaekers (2007; and forthcoming 2009).

⁵ A power complex is understood here as a contingent structural alliance that consolidates itself around patterns and networks of power, profit and protection emergent within the conflict environment. It can consist of various alliances between local strongmen, foreign and internal military elements as well as more “traditional” forms of authority (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2004).

stands at the heart of such proliferating trans- and subnational power diffusions. She concludes that:

What we have is perhaps the dislocation of a political system according to novel economic arrangements, conceptual boundaries, and conceptual distinctions: the state of exception—unregulated relations—being the very foundation of a new, fairly stable arrangement. In that sense, while these regimes of power and wealth can be described as novel realms of thought and action, they are nonetheless inscribed in the same logical, or epistemological, order as that of the nation-state (2005: 22).

That said, it is evident that during the post-Cold war period, the Zairian state stood under increasing pressure both from internal and external sources, and it gradually lost grip over large territories and populations. By operating officially outside the state's realm, many of these governable spaces on the margins of the post-colonial state escaped the theoretical obligation to pay taxes liable as official revenue, which could be used to expand state sovereignty over its territory and society at large. Instead, such emerging spaces constantly hollowed out post-colonial territoriality both from within and from the outside, notably through an active engagement with global capitalist markets (see also Duffield 2001; Clapham 2002). Without falling into generalist descriptions of processes of "globalisation", it remains evident that such emerging complexes deeply challenged the territorial power of the post-colonial state and its centralising, authoritarian nature. By constantly withdrawing resources from the state, and by progressively ascribing rights to wealth, security and national belonging to Congo's coping populations, the actors and institutions that gradually carved out these governable spaces fundamentally transformed the state in its recognised, sovereign status. In the next section, we will take a deeper look at this developing state reconfiguration in North Kivu, where the gradual withdrawal of encompassing state power had facilitated the emergence of several governable complexes in the sphere of land access and cross border commerce (cf. *supra*). While this evolution can certainly not be extrapolated to the entire country, it became nonetheless significant to the extent that it was coupled to regional and national (geo)political agendas during the first and second Congolese wars (1996–97; 1998–2003). In the first part of the next section, we will discuss the consequences of this regionalised war on dynamics of political reconfiguration while in the second, some of these dynamics will be weighed against the current process of political "transition",

induced by the international community as a resolution to the current crisis.

The Kivus: Reshaping the State from the Margins

War and Political Transformation

Although an analysis of the war's origins in eastern Congo would certainly be interesting from the current perspective, lack of space forces us to limit ourselves to the essentials. It suffices to say that this regionalised civil war—which constituted one of this century's worst humanitarian disasters and claimed the lives of millions of deaths—, was driven by local, national as well as regional agendas (Vlassenroot 2002). As we explained above, the progressive informalisation of political and economic interaction during the 1980s and 1990s had produced a reconfiguration of relationships in Congo's border regions, which would eventually reshape the state from its margins. While the attitude of Mobutu initially remained one of divide-to-rule, a mounting political internal and international pressure forced him to embrace a process of political democratisation (Willame, 1992). Although this process did not bring about a regime change as such, it still enabled political entrepreneurs in Kivu to consolidate the alliances they had fostered in the sphere of provincial politics and economic accumulation, which they could now start to protect against unwelcome intruders. In this sense, the democratisation period added another element to galloping state erosion, namely the manipulation of national belonging for particularistic ends. In the early 1990s, accusations were increasingly formulated against citizens of 'doubtful' nationality, in particular the Rwandan-speaking (Banyarwanda) landlords and, to a lesser extent, traders that had accumulated strength during the nationalisation process (cf. supra). During this period, a coalition of local politicians began mobilising male youngsters and militias against the participation of the Banyarwanda community in local elections. In turn, this spurred the organisation of local defence groups by Banyarwanda, some of whom fled over the border to participate in the rebellion of the Rwandan Patriotic Army against the regime of President Habyarimana. The result was a violent clash between 'autochthonous' and 'allochthonous' groups in the province of North Kivu, in which thousands of people were killed and displaced. When in 1993–94, more than one million Burundian and Rwandan refugees started to settle in Zaire as a result

of the Rwandan genocide, this created the logic for a future regional conflict that placed the Rwandan Hutu-Tutsi antagonism at the heart of local political struggle.⁶

Besides this important regional dimension, however, what was often forgotten in academic and policy analysis was the profoundly political nature of the war in the Great Lakes region, which continued to combine elements of local struggle with regional political agendas and economic strife. On the one hand, this involved the growing intermingling of local and regional power configurations. When the alliance of forces led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila launched its campaign against Mobutu from North Kivu, it was partly a creation by Presidents Museveni and Kagame from Rwanda and Uganda, who were becoming increasingly frustrated about the way Mobutu was dealing with the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide. Since 1994–95, groups of extremist Hutu militias had been carrying out attacks on Rwandan territory from the Congolese refugee camps in Goma and Bukavu, and this was putting both regimes at risk. Once Kabila arrived in the capital Kinshasa, he transformed the name of his country to the Democratic Republic of Congo, with which he wanted to announce a new era in Central Africa after years of Mobutist dictatorship.

In August 1998, however, a new offensive started in eastern Congo under the name of the *‘Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie’* (RCD), which analysts described as diverse constellation of former regime supporters, Mobutists, and representatives of the Rwandan-speaking minorities that had been discriminated by both the Kabila and Mobutu regimes. The RCD rebellion resulted to a great extent from Kabila’s problematic relationship remained with the Kivu region, where the widespread anti-Mobutist feelings did not seem to rhyme with his conquering government style—and less even with the “foreigners” that had accompanied him to Kinshasa (de Villers et al. 1999: 223). The RCD nonetheless experienced important divisions between “anti-regime” thinkers like professor Wamba-Dia-Wamba, and those opting for “elite recycling”. In the words of Mehler and Tull:

⁶ This differentiation between internal and external causes at the same time reveals an interesting discussion about the origins of the Congolese crisis. While some claim that the conflict started with the regionalization of the Rwandan genocide (Lemarchand 1997, 2001; Marysse and Reyntjens 2005), others suggest that the civil war actually started earlier, with the introduction of “democratic” political competition during the years of the *Conférence Nationale Souveraine* (Vlassenroot 2002; see also Willame 1992; Bratton and Van de Walle 1994).

[v]irtually all RCD leaders had served formerly in senior government positions under Mobutu and Kabila and were therefore members of the political establishment. As such, they did not fight to address societal grievances but in order to integrate themselves into a system from which they had been excluded... These personalities possess the connections and resources to organize a rebellion as a means to enforce their (re-)inclusion into a political system which they have few incentives to transform (2006: 376).

This is not to say that the Congo wars were nothing more than an opportunistic struggle for political positions and economic gain. As the quoted authors assess, political transformation during the Congolese conflict could hardly be expected to be driven by these recycling political elites, for whom clinging on to power proved more important than forging a genuine regime change. Real political transformation should rather be sought in another field, namely within the different governable spaces that had become the site of political and economic competition during the pre-war period. Within the context of regionalised war and political turmoil, a variety of power configurations actually started to emerge during the Congo wars that exercised a decisive influence on regional processes of political (trans)formation. Particularly in Congo's borderlands, these processes would be further precipitated by the involvement of foreign armies and militias that partly used the Congolese rebellions as proxies to realise their own agendas. In Ituri for example, a region to the north of North Kivu on the border between Sudan and Uganda, a peculiar coalition emerged between a Ugandan army General (James Kazini), a former Mobutu administrator (Adèle Lotsove) and her cousin Thomas Lubanga who became head of a local militia engaged in acts of ethnic purification and resource pillage. During the war years, this emerging "complex" would increasingly concentrate on the task of government in this rich African borderland, including the ascription of rights to wealth (notably through unfree labour and unofficial cross border commerce), the definition of citizenship (e.g. as '*originaires*' versus '*non-originaires*') and finally local security. This latter task was increasingly carried out in collaboration with Ugandan army units, who started to act more or less as private security guards for local landlords and transnational businessmen (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2004). Similarly on the Congo-Ugandan border in North Kivu, businessmen involved in "informal" cross border commerce used their new relationship to the rebel movement to foster new linkages with transnational markets and capital. Next to this private protection arrangement, this relation

brought about some genuine changes to the local governance framework in terms of access to wealth, services and rights (Raeymaekers 2007).

To summarise, the Congolese war did bring about some important changes to the various governable spaces that emerged during the post-colonial era as a reaction to economic crisis and state contraction. Notwithstanding their different outcomes—which are in itself interesting to study (see Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2008 forthcoming)—these different power reconfigurations definitely kept pointing at the profoundly constitutive character of transboundary phenomena like war and cross border exchange, which ultimately exercised a decisive influence on regional processes of political (trans)formation. As John Clark asserts, the foreign actors engaged in Congo's wars (particularly Uganda) might initially have become involved for pure questions of "regime security", i.e. deflecting opposition towards outside territories to consolidate national political bargains.⁷ As the war proceeded, however, and their armies were stationed at thousands of kilometres from their capitals, they gradually became part of a different reality of localised political struggles and competition for economic resources that generated different types of loyalties and alliances than initially intended. To the same token, the different complexes that arose in the sphere of local resource competition and communal political strife became increasingly regionalised, as neighbouring army Generals and political entrepreneurs started to intermingle in local struggles and take over tasks that theoretically belonged to the sphere of state governance. As a result, the regional war complex of the DR Congo not only generated important markets of protection between rebels, (foreign) armies and economic agents, but simultaneously demonstrated how such sites of competition remained inherently embedded in the system of economic production and political patronage associated with the post-colonial Mobutist state. In hindsight, this gradual reconfiguration of political order in Central Africa's borderlands also seems to point at the inherently political nature of wars like the Congolese conflict, which are as much about redefining people's places in (inter)national political and economic constellations as they are about inter-communal violence and strife (see also Berdal 2005; Cramer 2006). In the next

⁷ One strategy employed by regional leaders, for example, was to leave their soldiers the liberty to plunder, so they would withdraw from stating claims at home (see Perrot 1999).

section, we will further develop on this argument before making a few more general conclusions.

Transformation versus Transition

In 2003, the international community finally succeeded in making an end to hostilities and placing a transitional government at the head of the country in Kinshasa. After years of political and military power jostling, an agreement was finally reached between the different armed parties to grant their support to transitional government structures and integrate their militias into a new, unified army. Presided by the son of Laurent-Désiré, Joseph Kabila, and four vice-presidents, this transitional government was to prepare Congo for national elections in 2006, and simultaneously rebuild financial and economic infrastructure. The proposed power-sharing formula—which in Congo quickly acquired the nickname 1+4—theoretically should have taken the clout out of Congo's explosive situation and transform this country's longstanding civil war into a "positive sum game" for the different contending parties. As Tull and Mehler point out, this strategy nonetheless ran the risk of creating important incentive structures that made violent rebellion appealing in the pursuit of blocked political aspirations (Mehler and Tull 2006). The substantial increase of insecurity during this transition period further seems to confirm this analysis. Both in Kinshasa and the borderlands, the stakes of political power rapidly increased as rival forces and militias competed for a place in the national government and army, and at the same time attempted to consolidate their wartime political structures.

Of course, this situation did not come entirely as a surprise. Political transitions like the DR Congo are expected to attract a series of peace "spoilers"—often leaders of irregular militias and armed groups whose interest lies in sustaining a climate of violence rather than profiting from peace (Stedman 1997). This phenomenon is explained by the fact that for certain members of these groups (very often those who missed out on the economic opportunities of war) continuing disruptions to peace processes through national and transnational alliances can offer a guarantee of substantial income and elevated social status (Hartwell 2006). The art of facilitating a transition from war to peace, therefore, consists mainly in ensuring that those benefiting from war are in a position to benefit more from peace (see Keen 2001; Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005). Based on this assumption, the preferred strategy has

thus been to pursue an all-inclusive agreement between warring parties, because too narrowly based agreements may risk to be spoiled or undermined by excluded actors (see Mehler and Tull 2006; and Roger 2004). The risk, however, is that this “violence-in-peace” takes on a much more systemic character as transition processes evolve. The real danger is that the new ruling elite may share with so-called peace “spoilers” an interest in maintaining a climate of insecurity that may result in stalling the process of political transition altogether. By simultaneously maintaining a foot in new government institutions and existing wartime political structures, participants in power-sharing agreements may even promote the endemic character of insecurity and violence, which thus acquires a structural character. A permanent state of insecurity may emerge which at once is reminiscent of the era of “weak” post-colonial statehood and builds on the incentives created by this transitional political environment. Unfortunately, such a situation of “neither-war-nor-peace” (Richards 2005) seems to be developing rapidly in the DR Congo today. According to the UN mission MONUC, the Congolese army has actually become the greatest disrupter of peace and security, which makes it not so much different from its predecessors of the ‘Forces Armées Zairoises’ and the colonial ‘Force Publique’ (cf. *supra*). Army abuses have included arbitrary arrests and beatings, to more systematic forms of violence including pillaging and rape. In the meantime in Kinshasa, the various “power complexes” that consolidated themselves during the war, and which include militia members, local strongmen as well as transboundary economic interests, slowly but certainly integrated themselves within the transitional institutions, from where they commanded this parallel access to security, wealth and resources.

An illustrative example of this trend is the “coercive governance structure” that emerged during the transition period in Walikale, a resource rich region in the South-western part of North Kivu. In a forthcoming article, Garret et al. describe this structure roughly as “an institutionalised political and economic system of rules that allows reliability of agreements between the military leadership and the civilian population” in the domain of resource exploitation (Garrett et al. 2009, forthcoming). Within this specific governable space, the 85th brigade of the Congolese army cooperates with the territorial administrator and a number of mineral trading firms in the control of cassiterite mining and trade, who simultaneously provide targeted security for specific social groups involved in the extraction of tin ore. While

incredibly risky, illiberal and exclusive, this complex of actors still advances processes of “governance formation”, which is described in this context as the establishment of institutionalised political and economic systems of rule. In particular, this governance complex has set up an internal and external protection system, and generates wealth through an institutionalised taxation system.

To conclude, the internationally induced transition in the DR Congo does not seem to have produced a unidirectional outcome of liberal peace and security in the aftermath of the war. Rather, it combines pockets of security in the urban centres with large swaths of territory that remain either uncontrolled or scarcely populated by state-based agencies and institutions. This seems to produce at least two interconnected outcomes. On the one hand, such territories of “parallel” economic and political power apparently undermine the process of peace and state reconstruction, as they prevent the gradual expansion of a formalised economy and embracement of liberal democratic values as proposed in the project of political “transition”. In these territories, economic wealth, services and rights continue to be governed by an oligopoly of interconnected actors, of which “the” state is but one and often a very weak component. On the other hand, however, the continued existence of such governable spaces in the interstices of the state suggest that even in situations of “neither-war-nor-peace”, a negotiated, mutual accommodation of economic and political interests can be generated in collaboration with state agencies and institutions. Even though they remain generally weak, divided and often besieged, public authorities associated with the state do not entirely disappear from such local government nexuses, as they continue to perform the image of the nation-state reflected in clientelist social service provision.

Mediated Statehood

One term that can help us to describe this current situation is that of mediated statehood. Reflecting the intermediate stage in which Congo’s political system finds itself, i.e. between state and non-state, official and unofficial sources of governance, this concept of mediated statehood refers back to the idea of Sally Falk Moore stated thirty years ago. In her book ‘Law as Process’ (1978), she argues that the “state” in Africa usually presents itself in two different dimensions, i.e. as the embodiment of public authority and in the form of an idea. To analysts of

Congolese politics, this actually represents the greatest ambiguity to be resolved today, namely how image and representation are constantly connected and disconnected (see also De Boeck 2007). On the one hand, it is evident that the state's public authority is constantly sapped from its valuable sources, as different subsystems of power mediate their access to crucial economic means. On the other hand, however, these same subsystems also adopt an extremely ambiguous position towards the state, which is demonstrated at once in the vindication of their non-state status and their employment of the same, "formal", language of the state. Whether in the domain of resource exploitation, ownership regulation or cross border trade, unofficial and official agencies still employ the same, patrimonialist language of the state as it was expressed in patrimonial texts and representations. This ultimately leads to a paradoxical situation, in which the idea of statehood is also "effectively propelled by institutions that challenge the state but depend on the idea of it to do so" (Lund 2006: 688–689).

Examples of such mediation practices include, for example, the ad hoc bargaining of economic spoils in Congo's border areas, or the negotiation of the monopoly of violence in resource rich zones such as Walikale (cf. *supra*). In such contested spaces, Congolese public authorities increasingly rely on strategies of mediation with local strongmen and other rival forces in order to strengthen their political control. As said, these strategies especially appear in the country's border regions like the Kivu, Ituri and Katanga which, next to their contested nature, represent an enormous economic potential: the presence of tariff posts as well as vast reserves of natural resources makes these Congolese "borderlands" an essential part of the state's capacity to perform its key functions. Because it lacks both the means and the power to claim physical control over these regions, mediated statehood appears the only strategy the Congolese government has currently at its disposal. The interlocutors of the Congolese government in this exercise are the various "power complexes" that consolidated themselves during the war, and which include militia members, local strongmen as well as a range of transboundary economic activities. Different forms of mediated statehood can nonetheless be distinguished, depending on the relative power of local power complexes towards central state agencies. Following Tilly (2005), the following types of state mediation can currently be identified, which respectively consist of strategies and tactics used by powerful and less powerful agents (see also De Certeau 1984).

- A main strategy and tactic consists of the ad hoc *bargaining* of economic control over strategic locations and sectors, such as checkpoints, border posts and military roadblocks. In the Kivu region, for example, powerful businessmen continue to monopolise the traffic in minerals and goods over Congo's borders, without apparently being touched by the state's taxing methods. During the war, taxes for transborder trade were often negotiated between businessmen and rebel movements—mostly with favourable outcomes for businessmen that were willing to share the risks involved. Today, this situation has slightly changed. While most rebel groups are represented inside the government (either as Ministers or Parliament members), government representatives have to work through a series of intermediaries that attach certain conditions to their collaboration. At a local level, this negotiated statehood is expressed in turn in the constant bribing, wheeling and dealing between state and economic agents wanting to optimise the benefits in their “informal”, self-relying livelihoods.
- A second strategy is that of *clientelism*. As Eisenstadt and Roniger indicate, the aim of clientelistic relations is to limit the free access of population strata to markets and political goods. This is done for example through the monopolisation of entry positions to the use and conversion of these resources. The interaction of such relationships is usually based on the simultaneous exchange of different kinds of assets on the one hand, and promises of reciprocity, solidarity and loyalty on the other; it usually involves some kind of package deal, where “protection” is exchanged for mostly conditional support (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984). In Congo, such clientelism is regularly observed in the making and unmaking of political alliances, for example during national elections. The main Alliance de la Majorité Présidentielle (AMP), for example, assembles more than thirty political parties that simultaneously seek political protection from big men in Kinshasa while ensuring conditional support for the presidential majority through their local antenna. Because of this highly clientelistic agenda, it is probably better to talk about “configurations” rather than political parties, which have completely lost their representative meaning.
- A third tactic, employed for example by smugglers and illegal militias, consists of the *concealment* of core activities in order to escape control by state agencies. This tactic is only rarely used though,

as both armed and non-armed actors usually seek visibility from the state in order to guarantee beneficial outcomes. Unless it is coupled to a certain degree of clientelism, such hidden tactics are also doomed to failure, because protection from official sources is needed to realise unofficial goals. This is why concealment is usually less observed in mediated states than in repressive dictatorships (see Tilly 2005).

- A final strategy and tactic is that of *dissension*, which consists of an enduring standoff with central authority on the control over violence and resources. Such strategy can lead to different outcomes, including secession or brokered autonomy. Perhaps the best example is the violent encounter in North Kivu between government soldiers and the dissident General Laurent Nkunda, who refuses the terms of engagement imposed by government and international agents. Expressing widely held fears of exclusion by the local Banyarwanda community, his claims are provoking further desertions from politicians with blocked political aspirations as well as claims for larger local autonomy. This strategy can eventually lean towards negotiation when both contenders end up in a permanent stalemate.

Although obviously provisional, the implications of these observations are potentially challenging for policy and academic analysis. Instead of being a mere question of peace “spoilers”, the enduring climate of conflict and insecurity in the DRC could very well perform a specific function of continuing violence through other means. This partly lines up with Christopher Cramer’s statement that violent strategies of accumulation and rent-seeking in the context of conflict and war are not necessarily exclusively “bad for development” (Cramer 2006: 177–78). Non-market interventions in economies by a state and non-state actors can in fact represent instances of primitive accumulation, i.e. extra-economic accumulation possibilities that potentially drives the transition to capitalism and integration in globalised markets. From the perspective of capitalism, therefore, violence can potentially provide an “enabling environment” (Cramer 2006: 213) that shows not a reaction but on the contrary a deepening integration in globalised markets. For the participants in Congo’s transition process, maintaining a climate of structural violence enabled them to simultaneously maintain their position as intermediary “gatekeepers”, and indirectly generate access to state resources. The net result of this dynamic is

not only that the state is systematically deprived of its key sources of income—as is illustrated for example in the natural resource sector—but violence is used as a structural means to maintain access to state power. This situation might not be very different from other transition processes in Africa, where senior political elites rapidly signed away their country’s political future in return for personal financial gain (Ellis 2005). It might also not be very different from Congo’s immediate post-independence era, when access to political power was determined foremost by “patronage” networks rather than democratic representation. The real question, however, is what Congo’s political future will bring if this situation should be brought to its logical conclusion. Is the current transition period simply leading us back to the well-known African “politics of the belly”, as Bayart et al. (1999) aptly described? Or are we seeing a different path to African state formation emerging that partly sprouts from the current political crisis? In the following section, we will try to pull some conclusions from the previous analysis.

Conclusion: Congo’s Governable Spaces

In the previous section, we tried to offer an explanation for Congo’s apparent propensity for resilience in a context characterised by decades of calamity and political turmoil. Through a discussion of Congo’s long path of conflict and political transformation, we suggested that political power progressively moved from centralising, encompassing forms of statehood to a plurality of agencies and institutions embedded in several “governable spaces”. Still, we refused the terminology of state collapse on the grounds that Congolese nation-statehood continues to be projected and sustained by non-state agencies that practically need the state to claim legitimacy and authority at a wider societal level. Within this context of “twilight” political institutions (Lund 2006), we suggested that this image of a strong and leading Central African nation was progressively disconnected from practice, which is subsequently taking the form of more contested and mediated types of statehood.

For those who remain desperate with such ambiguous information, our colleague Michael Schatzberg probably offers some reason for consolation. In our analysis of African, and in particular Congolese statehood, he says, we should not think of state formation as attaining a “final, predetermined goal”, but instead as “an ongoing, continu-

ous and extremely uneven process of formation, consolidation, and even, occasionally, disintegration or dissolution” (Schatzberg 1988: 6). Rather than maintaining an ideal-type model of antagonistic state-society relations, it might be more useful to see Congolese statehood as “straddling” between several apparently opposed worlds. Just like the smuggler that has his feet firmly planted in the formal and the informal spheres, Congolese state agencies find themselves moving constantly between the formal image of a proud nation-state and the practice of everyday, street-level bureaucracy and survival. Central to this survival are the “elaborate network of relations formed amongst the complex of institutions, organizations and apparatuses...between state and non-state organizations” (Rose and Miller 1999: 176).⁸

Reminding the comment by Crawford Young in the beginning of this chapter, the difficulty of the Congolese student remains indeed to define this country’s rule system within the ceaseless “change and flux” of emerging pattern of politics. In the past, such rule systems have classically been associated with different types of state sovereignty. In 1987, for example, when Mobutu’s divide-and-rule system was nearing its abyss, Jackson and Rosberg explained Africa’s government crisis as a consequence of its lacking “empirical” sovereignty. Missing the attributes of territorial, representative statehood, this explained why government became nominal rather than substantial, and political struggle centred on positions instead of representations. Instead, the sustaining of its “juridical” sovereignty by the international community of states guaranteed its continued survival even in the absence of internal consolidation and cohesion: “if the persistence of a state were primarily the result of empirical statehood,” they concluded however, “some Sub-Saharan countries would clearly not qualify as states some of the time” (Jackson and Rosberg 1982: 3). In a reaction to this limiting state-centred view, Janet Roitman proposes to look instead at the pluralisation of regulatory practices that often accompanies state privatization in Sub-Sahara Africa. Following Foucault’s notion that

⁸ According to Roitman (1999), “straddling” potentially forms an important corrective to presupposed state-society opposition in that it involves dispersing risk by balancing alternative types of resources within a single, integrated system of productive relations. She suggests this term in opposition to dominant theoretical presuppositions (be they Weberian or Marxist) that condemn our understanding of such seemingly contradictory or multifaceted situations to “stages” and “transitions”, about situations that are rather as the result of specific histories which have experienced moments of upheaval and sedimentation.

it is not power but the subject of power that provides our main field of study, she claims that such privatisation might make us believe the state is being delegitimised by parallel forms of governance, while what is effectively questioned is only the *intelligibility* of the relationship as they have been hitherto exercised by the state. Instead of pondering over the ontological aspect or place of particular practices or concepts, therefore, it might be better to reveal them simply through their effects of e.g. pluralised regulatory practices and systems of survival.

Perhaps one way out of this discussion is to see sovereignty not as an attribute of agents (e.g. governments and parliaments) but of *structures* of relationships as they are expressed in bodies of law, regulations or codes. Insofar as they reflect the “enduring structure of governance and rule” in that specific social domain (Benjamin and Duvall 1985: 25), then, these relationships can effectively give meaning to practices and agency in a given area of social life (Latham 2000). As Latham suggests, this may make it possible to also associate sovereignty with various types of non-state organisations and institutions, and not just the nation-state:

When we understand sovereignty like this..., it becomes clear that the state is only one of a number of forces—along with sites of private power from corporations to professional associations—helping to establish the broader bodies of codes and rules that are the locus of pre-eminent power in a social field (Latham 2000: 3).

A prerequisite to such analysis, however, is that one distinguishes more clearly between authority—or the ability to place action, and practices, into a meaningful social frame or context—and the bodies of rules and relations that effectively structure such actions and practices in a given field or time. Sovereignty, then, becomes not any more a question of juridical or empirical qualities but rather a reflection of the marriage between structure and agency in a given social field, which simultaneously gives such relationship its foundation and meaning. In a different context, Klute and Von Trotha observe the emergence of para-sovereignty in several North African territories, which have partly taken over the rights of central state sovereignty in several crucial domains. According to these authors, para-sovereignty refers to the process in which

social and political centres of power and relevant nongovernmental groups have taken over part of the rights of sovereignty of the central authority or of the recognized, i.e. formal, and therefore mostly legally

sanctioned duties in the core area of state administration... The process of handing over of sovereign rights and basic state administrative duties is a kind of expropriation procedure of state sovereignty and occurs by means of process of 'informal decentralisation' and 'privatisation' (Klute and von Trotha 2004: 110–111).

At the same time, however, our own analysis suggests that such “informal” decentralisation does not have to preclude the persistence of state-based practices and regulations within this same, sovereign field of action. Rather, it is the structure of relations underlying such regulatory practices that gives this process meaning and direction.

Perhaps the most important conclusion from this kind of analysis is that instead of pure banditry, state privatisation or regionalised warfare, much of the violent transformations we witness in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa are fought precisely over what power means. Whether they are vested in traditional authority, sovereign dictatorship, or models of democratic transition, such violent encounters usually generate a variety of outcomes ranging from “civil” to regionalised war, economic predation, and mafia-type extortion rackets in which protector and extortionist are often one and the same agent (Cramer 2006). One of the central themes in this kind of violent transformations remains, therefore, to identify who exactly is able to capture surpluses on the basis of what sort of rights claims, and how such claims eventually become legitimised under which sort of enforcement systems. Just like in 1965, the prospects of Congo’s political system from this perspective remain again very uncertain. What the current deadlock in the Congolese “transition” process reveals in the first place, however, is that the exercise of that state-building, rather than being a technical exercise, will likely involve serious levels of political conflict in which the authority of the state depends to a great extent on its coercive potential. Until we become fully aware of this, Congo’s political transition is likely to linger on between situations of neither-war-nor-peace and forms of state mediation.

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THE NEO-TRIBAL COMPETITIVE ORDER IN THE BORDERLAND OF EGYPT AND LIBYA

Thomas Hüsken

Introduction

Colonial expansion and the subsequent global implementation of statehood seemed to support the idea of evolutionists and scholars of the theory of systems that the modern bureaucratic state of western origin is the inevitable model of political organisation for human societies. Since the end of the Cold War, the crisis and the factual erosion of the state in the former USSR and Africa initiated a debate on the transformation of statehood. Apart from generalisations such as “weak” or “failing” states, transformations of statehood are nowadays labelled with numerous additional attributes, such as “network state” (Züricher and Koehler 2001), a term referring to interconnections between the state and networks of non-state actors, or “cunning states” (Randeria 2003), describing weak states that rely on development cooperation and international aid to survive.

In the last two decades, Africa has experienced dramatic changes resulting in new social and political settings almost everywhere on the continent. The end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, multi-party democracy in Tanzania and Benin, the achievement of peace in Mozambique and Angola, civil wars in Somalia, Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Rwanda genocide and the regionalisation of conflicts are a few well-known, examples of a political setting that is becoming more and more heterogeneous. These processes have not only chased many of Africa’s military or dictatorial regimes away, but have also fragmented organised state structures and administration or have even caused them to collapse. These changes are sometimes explained as part of global change: a result of the end of the Cold War and the breakdown of the Socialist Block. At other times, specific African causes are put forward. Africa, however, nowadays serves as a particularly powerful symbol of state failure. In Africa, the crisis of statehood seems to be deeper than else where in the world. Significantly, the attributes used to qualify resulting structures of the African

state have been consistently negative: “failing”, “failed”, “weak”, “soft”, “incomplete”, “collapsed”, “greedy”, or “criminal”, are some of them (Bayart 1989; Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999; Fatton 1992; Chabal and Daloz 1999). The term ‘heterarchy’, as opposed to hierarchy, seems appropriate to describe resulting differentiated distributions of power-foci in many African countries (Chabal, Feinman and Skalnik 2004; Bodarenko, Grinin and Korotayev 2004).

During the same period regional or transnational political actors emerged (Copans 2003) who attempted to, and sometimes even succeeded in, expropriating state sovereignty and administration through processes of informal ‘privatisation’ (Klute / Trotha 2004). Some of the new actors on the complex African political scene seem to be well known “old fellows”: chieftaincies and so-called traditional authorities are now reappearing on the regional and national political stage (Oomen 2002; Van Rouveroy 1994). Some political actors, however, wear new faces. These new actors include ethnic militia, economic and military entrepreneurs, transnational smugglers, and last but not least, agents in international organisations of development aid or conflict management.

Nevertheless, the central reference of thought and consideration remains the state. Political organisation beside or beyond the state is predominantly perceived as deviant development, and not as independent political organisation. This is particularly true for the discussion on the reconstruction of statehood in Africa (Tetzlaff / Jacobeit 2005). As a consequence, current debates on non-state groups and formations focus on the “informalisation” or the “re-traditionalisation” of politics in Africa (Chabal / Dalosz 1999; Kassimir 2001), portraying non-state actors as competitors and opponents of the state.

Looking at the way political anthropology is dealing with the transformation of statehood in Africa, one can distinguish three lines of thought. The first perspective is dedicated to local case studies: Bier-schenk (1999) analyses the political arena and its actors in the African city of Parakou in Benin and thus illustrates how the command state (Elwert 2001) operates behind the facade of modern statehood on the basis of clientelism, corruption, and the appropriation of development aid. The second school focuses on African chieftainship and segmentary models of tribal organisation; it tries to integrate a historical perspective that aims at the analysis of continuities and innovations of these modes of political organisation within new contexts and settings (Spear 2003). This school was able to demonstrate how chieftainship

in Africa was institutionalised as “administrative chieftainship” (Beck 1989, Trotha 1997, Alber 2000) within the intermediary rule of the colonial state. The historical depth of the analysis reveals the continuity and inventiveness of “neo-traditional” chieftaincy. Contemporary chieftaincies seem to operate within the context of modern statehood as well as in the sphere of tradition. Chiefs show competence in both spheres of political organisation, and are thus able to succeed as political entrepreneurs on local or regional levels, and even become part of the political elite of the state (Lentz 2000). Skalnik (2002) shows that chiefs, particularly in times of transformation, successfully turned peoples’ feelings of uncertainty into support for themselves by combining chieftaincy with notions of security and trust. We do not yet know whether the renaissance of chieftaincy in Africa is merely a substitute for weak or incomplete statehood doomed to disappear as soon as the state recovers, or whether it indicates the emergence of non-state modes of political organisation and rule (Skalnik 2004).

In North Africa, the interrelationship between states and tribes is discussed in ways that go beyond the perspective of antagonism and conflict (Khoury / Kostiner 1990). Although tribes played a significant role in the creation of Islamic empires, they also dominated, at various times, vast areas that did not come under effective Islamic imperial authority. From the middle of the nineteenth century, tribal groups were incorporated, at different speeds and in varying degrees, into the modern states that evolved at that time. Tribes, however, did not necessarily cease to exist because states were formed. In fact, it was not uncommon in the process of state formation for tribes to be encouraged to reach an agreement with state authority in order to preserve their autonomy. In other cases, new tribes emerged that did not organize themselves on the basis of ethnicity and kinship, but on the basis of other, more dynamic loyalties (Anderson 1990, Hüsken / Roenpage 1998). This perspective is in sharp contrast to “traditional” contributions which promote the paradigm of antagonism and conflict between state and tribe (Scholz 1991). The political reality in North Africa thus seems to be characterised by varying degrees of interlacement between states and tribes, joined by a number of new groups and formations that evolved in recent years. Today, tribal networks or formations with tribal backgrounds and resources dominate the military and security apparatus in Libya (Obeidi 2002). They have successfully appropriated state functions in southern Algeria and even established parastates in the north of Mali. The interlacement of tribe and state

either appears as division of labour between both parties, as a process in which the state is colonised by tribesmen, or as privatisation and appropriation of sovereign rights and central tasks of the state. Thus, it is obvious that the Leviathan has still not managed to overwhelm non-state forms of local power. Interlacement can be understood as a dynamic process of transformation and innovation challenging and changing existing conceptions and models of order.

A third perspective in political anthropology focuses on the emergence of local, non-state forms of power and their interlacement with the state. This perspective does also include a historical dimension: it explores the cultural construction of peripheries within states (Das / Pool 2004) and emerging forms of power and domination. However, the crisis of the state in Africa seems to alter the spaces for manoeuvre for non-state political actors, enabling them to succeed with their conceptions of order against, parallel to, or in interlacement with, the state (Lebeau et al. 2003). One of the best-known examples in this respect is the interlacement of non-state conceptions of order and models of statehood in Somaliland. Here, the interlacement of non-state actors and what has been called a failing state has led to a “neo-segmentary order” (Heyer 1997, Trotha 2005) that nevertheless continues to present itself as a state.

Klute and Trotha have introduced the conceptions of “para-statehood” and “para-sovereignty” (Klute 1998; Trotha 2000, Trotha / Klute 2001) in order to explain the particular situation of a chief-taincy in Mali. They describe the relationship between the parastate and the central state of Mali as a conflictive process in which local actors appropriate rights and functions of the state, thus transforming statehood in Mali into a heterarchical setting. The conceptions of para-statehood and para-sovereignty were recently adapted to alter the perspective on failing states by drawing attention not to the weakness of the state, but to the strength and vitality of local forms of power (Hauck 2004). Another perspective uses the approach to focus on the takeover of central functions of the state by development organisations. This does not only induce processes of the erosion of the state’s legitimacy (Neubert 1997), but can also lead to a “para-sovereign rule of development” (Klute / Trotha 1999). Since most of the studies mentioned refer to post-conflict situations, it seems quite reasonable to ask whether the emergence of local power is necessarily bound to conflict, civil war or post-war settings. Looking at the *Aulad Ali* tribes, we will discover that this is not the case.

The importance of African border zones as ‘productive sites’ is increasingly recognised within Africanist research communities. Igor Kopytoff (1987) argued that the institutional viability of border zones is dependant upon their more or less distant metropolises. Today, however, the attention of scholars is drawn to the potential of border zones to shape and define the centre. Recent studies on the borderlands between Namibia and Angola (Dobler 2007) and Namibia and Zambia (Zeller 2007) reveal significant processes of economic growth. An important focus of study within this context is the ways in which state structures and border inhabitants jointly shape the border experience (Nugent 2007). In addition to this, the political realities in peripheries and borderlands of many post-colonial states in Africa seem to challenge state conceptions of sovereignty, territoriality and citizenship (Hüsken / Klute 2008). Thus, borderlands can be regarded as spheres where historical and contemporary forms of non-state politics and networks are hardly regulated or controlled by national or international regimes, and where opportunities for non-state political actors are manifold.

My contribution will start with a brief overview about the society of the *Aulad Ali* Bedouin, the respective literature and its central arguments. Then I will turn over to the empirical material¹ as follows: In the chapter “Neo-tribal Competitive Order” I will introduce the contemporary mode of political organisation in the borderland. The prefix “neo” underlines that we are dealing with innovative practices and ideas. Directly connected to this introduction is the examination of political leaders, who create and shape a great deal of this order. These leaders will be discussed in the chapter “Pioneers, Political Entrepreneurs and Preachers”. Subsequently the chapter “Innovative Practices, Travelling Models, Public Spaces and Media” will deal with innovative political processes in the borderland. Here the particular role of development projects on the Egyptian side of the border will be emphasised; party-membership and elections will be addressed and the role of global television and local magazines will be analysed. The chapter

¹ The transliteration of Arabic names and terms is simplified. Arabic is displayed in italicized letters. The names of cities, landscapes and places follow international maps. *Qahira* is replaced by the Cairo, instead of *Masr*, Egypt is used. There letters *Ayn* and *Hamza* are not distinguished and also not marked by special letters. The names of well known personalities are written according to the English fashion. All Arabic citations are translated into English by the author. I want to thank Daniel Rolf and Farrida Jawad for the editing and proof reading of the text.

“Competitive Legal Pluralism” introduces a variant of legal pluralism which is at stake in the borderland. The chapter “Borders and Borderland” looks at the economical, political and cultural aspects of the borderland. The article closes with some theoretical ideas on local power and domination in North Africa.

1. *The Aulad Ali in the Borderland of Egypt and Libya*

The territory of the *Aulad Ali* tribes stretches along the Mediterranean coast from Al-Hamam in Egypt to Tobruk in Libya. Approximately 400,000 *Aulad Ali* live in Egypt and around 100,000 in Libya. The *Aulad Ali* represents the majority (85 percent) of the population in the Egyptian governorate of Matruh. Nevertheless, they are confronted with a state that is dominated by Egyptians from the Nile Valley. The international border between Egypt and Libya offers opportunities for trade, smuggling and labour migration, particularly in the oil industry, but also in construction and in agriculture. The Egyptian state tries to appease the Bedouin population by investments in infrastructure, the channelling of international development aid and, more recently, by a loose and tolerant border regime that allows for various forms of legal and illegal transactions. Libya, on the other hand, is almost entirely populated by tribal groups. Here, the transborder trade to Egypt offers advantages that can be mobilised by the *Aulad Ali* in their relations with other tribes and the state. In both cases, the borderland provides a specific form of mobility that allows the *Aulad Ali* to escape the domination of the state by crossing the border.

The *Aulad Ali* Bedouins are not unknown to social anthropology and anthropogeography. However, the most recent empirical studies were conducted some years ago, among them the study of Müller-Mahn (1989), the analysis of a Bedouin economy by Hüsken and Roenpage (1998) and the seminal work of Rusch and Stein (1988). In addition, there is Obermeyer’s study on changing patterns of Bedouin leadership (1973), Cole and Al-Tourki’s study (1998) on labour, tourism, and economy and, of course, Lila Abu-Lughod’s popular “Veiled Sentiments” (1987). The relationship between states and tribes are described quite differently in the books quoted above. Based on “Segmentary Theory”, Müller-Mahn tends to identify general antagonisms between state and tribes. Modernization (and state formation) is seen as a process in which the tribe is infiltrated, marginalised and assimilated by the state. In contrast, Hüsken and Roenpage (1998)—follow-

ing the tradition of Marx (1978), Salzmann (1980), and Eickelman (1989)—emphasize processes of innovation, inventiveness and persistence in their analysis of Bedouin political organisation and politicians. In their point of view, nomadic tradition serves as a resource for the formation of we-group identities (Hobsbawm / Ranger 1976, Barth 1969), which are used to shape and organize change and transition. Thus we cannot speak of a general process in which local tribal structures are overpowered by the modern state. In accordance with the argument of Khoury / Kostiner (1990), the Aulad Ali too have played an active role in the context of state formation in Libya and Egypt. In addition, they have created a distinctively specific variant of political organisation.

2. *The Neo-tribal Competitive Order*

The recent political situation in the borderland of Egypt and Libya has been shaped by the genesis of an ethno-political movement of the *Aulad Ali* Bedouin that contradicts prevalent ideas about the decline of tribal societies. At the same time, it questions the image of dependent African peripheries established by Igor Kopytoff (1987). This movement is created and promoted by a multiplicity of Bedouin groups, which I call neo-tribal associations. The movement is not a cohesive formation but rather a heterogeneous one. A dynamic competition for political influence and economic success exists between the associations, and their relations with the respective states are also characterized by this competition.² Thus, we find political strategies that vary between interlacement with and appropriation of the state. The result of these interactions is a specific order of non-state and state that I call the neo-tribal competitive order.³ At the core of this order, we find new political ideas, institutions and practices that related to the process of appropriation.

Failed or weak statehood is often taken as a precondition for the emergence of non-state forms of power and domination. In the case of Egypt and Libya, this paradigm is not applicable. Thus, different aspects are of interest. The Egyptian state is comparatively stable and

² In Egypt, the competition among the associations is taking place within the tribal framework of the *Aulad Ali*. In Libya, the competition also includes other tribes and their respective associations.

³ The term corresponds with Heyer's (1997) notion of the "neosegmentary order".

capable of acting. It provides its citizens with basic services, has the monopoly of violence, and controls its territory. It knows the principle of the division of powers and possesses a constitution. In the past, the Egyptian state was often portrayed as a neo-patrimonial political system allowing for a certain form of pluralism under the coercive control of the state. More recent studies (Kienle 2001, Hüsken 2006, Demmelhuber / Roll 2007) point to a regime of competing and cooperating networks, which have successfully privatized the state. These networks—among them the old and new neo-liberal elites and particularly the extended neo-royal family of President Hosni Mubarak—use the state for the legal and illegal appropriation of material resources and the accumulation of power. State institutions and agencies are pervaded by informal networks and robe teams. Although the development of competent policies is often hindered by the struggle for power (Weiss 1994), the state apparatus remains intact and is furthermore stabilised by development revenues. The peripheries and border regions of Egypt are traditionally ruled by military governors loyal to Mubarak. The interesting point here is not the weakness or ill-functioning of the state, but the interlacement of an already informalised state with local power groups and the emergence of new agents and institutions.

Libya's political system and ideology seems shaped by a cross between nationalism and egalitarianism with Muammar Al-Gaddafi as revolutionary charismatic leader (Anderson 1990). Among the few recent studies at our disposal is Obeidi's "Political Culture in Libya" (2001), which states that informality and vagueness are characteristics of the regime and strategic means of politics. Though Gaddafi's nationalism does contain notions of territoriality and nationhood, it has never favoured the concept of the modern bureaucratic state. In his "Green Book" (released in three volumes during the 1970s), Gaddafi advocates a diffuse ideology of socialism and egalitarianism that portrays the nation as a big tribe rather than a society organised and structured by the state. The regime decreed the abolition of the tribe as a legal unit and reorganised local administrative structures according to the interests of Gaddafi, explicitly replacing "tribal politicians" by followers of the revolution. The reform dismissed those governors, mayors and deputy majors who were tribal sheikhs or notables. However already in the 1970s, Gaddafi had to stop this policy. Instead, a non-state focus of power successively emerged, dominated by members and associations of the *Qadadfa*—Gaddafi's tribe. Nowadays,

neo-tribal associations loyal to Gaddafi and his family dominate and control a significant part of the ministries, the police and the secret services. Other groups, such as the neotribal networks of the *Obaidat*, have appropriated the military apparatus in Libya's "Wild East", Cyrenaica. The tribes, it seems, are stepping out of the "shadow of the state" (Beck 1989). Nevertheless the Libyan state also remains capable of action. Recent studies in political science have called the connection between charismatic leadership, family-dynasty and democratic elements a "hybrid regime" (Diamond 2002). Although the role of tribes are often addressed, a detailed analysis is absent. However, the consensus seems to be that tribes contribute to the "primordialisation of politics" (Werenfels 2008:13) in Libya. At times, one also finds authors who portray tribes as a "general obstacle to development" (Al-Kikhia 1997).

3. *Associations, Pioneers, Political Entrepreneurs and Preachers*

The central actors in my field of study are represented by the neo-tribal associations and their leaders. The size and political weight of these associations varies significantly. These factors depend on their social resources and even more on the skill of their leading figures.⁴ The Bedouin use the Arabic term *Aila* (Lineage) to identify the neo-tribal associations. However, this emic typology is not very accurate. Although the core of the associations are based on close kinship relations, they are not necessarily congruent with lineages or clans. The relevance of relations that go beyond kinship and even beyond the tribal society are also increasing and the principle of kinship is therefore modulated to integrate different groups and interests. Thus, the associations refer to tribal tradition—in order to produce legitimacy—but they are not a functional element of the structure tribe, clan, lineage as stated by the classical segmentary theory (Evans-Pritchard 1973). In the case of associations, which have currently evolved around Islamic preachers, the tribal reference is left behind in favour of a religious logic. Regarding this background I find the term neo-tribal association accurate. This does not mean that inter-tribal networking or the integration of strangers has been unknown to tribal societies. Both are discussed in the seminal studies on the Bedouin of the Cyrenaica by

⁴ I am currently working with four associations. The smallest comprises around fifty men. The largest consists of 500 men.

Peters (1990) also documented concerning the *Aulad Ali* (Hüsken / Roenpage 1998). Nevertheless the recent processes of group formation and the respective political practices go significantly beyond the existing research findings. The associations are led by dominant personalities. One can distinguish these leaders by generation and function as “Pioneers” and “Political Entrepreneurs”.⁵ A particular group is represented by politically active men, who are labelled as “Preachers”. The pioneers consist of Bedouin leaders who chose to place land under cultivation and to sedentarise in the late 1940s. These personalities are now around 70 to 90 years old. As *Awaqil* (wise men) they act as the symbolic heads of economically and politically successful associations. The accomplishments of these leaders’ careers are due to a number of factors: the ability to anticipate social change and make decisions at the right time, and perhaps even more importantly, the ability to implement these decisions despite resistance from opposing groups. As important was the occupation of intermediate positions between tribe and state such as *Sheikh* (tribal leader) and *Umdah* (village representative) but also as members in regional and national parliaments and assemblies (Hüsken / Roenpage 1998). In the Libyan monarchy Bedouin notables and tribal leaders held an important position as consultants of the king. Here they were crucial for the implementation of policies on the regional and local level. Another important aspect in the lives and careers of the pioneers was their role as *Mardi* (conflict mediator), a position based on intimate knowledge of *Urf* (Bedouin customary law). Successful conflict mediation generated significant social prestige that could also be mobilised in the political field.

⁵ The term pioneer is not an emic expression. The Bedouin use terms like *Al-Umdah* (representative of a village), *Sheikh* (tribal leader) or *Aqila* (wise man) to honour these men and their achievements. Nevertheless the term pioneer seems appropriate to me, because the majority of these men did something innovative and new (such as sedentarization and farming) for the first time. The term political entrepreneur was also chosen by me. It is related to the type of the “development-broker” introduced by Thomas Bierschenk (1998). The development-broker acts in an intermediate position between development projects and the local population. The political entrepreneur however also acts beyond the world of development. In fact they organize the entire process of interlacement with and the appropriation of the state. The notion of entrepreneurship reflects the mixture of political and economical goals and the competitive character of these actors. On the other hand the term underlines their inventiveness and their creative potential in the sense of Schumpeter’s political understanding of the entrepreneur.

At times these intermediate positions were interpreted as state strategies to infiltrate and dissolve tribal structures of the *Aulad Ali* (Müller-Mahn 1989). However, this perception does not correspond with the emic historical perspective of the pioneers, and it is also not supported by my studies. On the contrary, the intermediate rule of the pioneers has improved the economic status of the Bedouin through the appropriation of state assistance and international development aid. Furthermore, the pioneers successfully protected internal Bedouin politics against the interventions of the state and weathered the anti-tribal policies of the early years of Gaddafi's rule. Even Gaddafi's recent practice of personally appointing loyal tribal leaders should not be misunderstood as a political one-way street that only serves the dictator. In fact it expresses the deep interdependency between state and not-state that is typical of neo-tribal competitive order in Libya.⁶ The persistence and success of the pioneers has laid the cornerstone for the current vitality of the neo-tribal order.

Today, the political entrepreneurs dominate the political arena. Most of them are "sons of the pioneers" and thus represent the successful reproduction of intermediate rule. They represent the current neo-tribal political elite of the borderland. The political entrepreneurs in Egypt have benefited from the state-driven education policies initiated by Gamal Abdel Nasser in the years between 1950 and 1970.⁷ Unlike their fathers, they graduated from schools and universities. We are in fact talking about cognitively and intellectually profound actors, who reveal their agency within the neo-tribal competitive order. However, the political entrepreneurs do not rule in an authoritarian sense and they do not command means of coercive power. Their claim to leadership is also not automatically provided by the tribal system.⁸ On the contrary, these leaders have to negotiate and to achieve their claims. A particularly crucial moment here is the creation of new practices and institutions.

⁶ See Davies (1987).

⁷ It is interesting to notice that this is also partly true for the Libyan side. Here the export of the Egyptian model served as form of inter-Arab development cooperation. In the respective years thousands of Egyptian engineers, scientists and teachers contributed to the development of Libya (and many other Arab nations).

⁸ The notion of *Asabiyya* (tribal solidarity, we-group-feeling) is often attributed to tribal societies and goes back to the argument of Ibn Khaldun in his *Muqadima*. Nowadays, political leaders and associations cannot rely on such tribal solidarity. This is particularly true for associations which have the character of political and economic alliances between actors who are only remotely or not at all related.

In these institutions tribal, statal, party political, development political and entrepreneurial ideas and patterns of action are turned into a new mode that regulates the political relations and processes in the borderland and beyond. They generate order within associations as well as between different groups of the *Aulad Ali* and moderate relations with other tribes in Libya and Egypt. In addition, they are applied in transnational conflict regulation on the basis of customary law. The emerging institutions organize and structure interaction with states, political parties, private companies and development projects. However, the novelty of these arrangements often comes at the cost of their embeddedness in local culture. Their legitimacy is thus bound to their success and effectiveness and to lesser degree connected to traditional tribal ideas.

The role of the associations is crucial to the political entrepreneurs—the associations represent their most important social, political and economical resource. The internal structure of the associations is only rhetorically consistent with the egalitarian principles of tribal ideology. In fact, a limited number of three to five men of an extended family manage an association. These men usually establish a specific division of labour according to their skills and ambitions. The political entrepreneur organises this process and represents the leading circle, while the loyalty of those outside of the inner circle is achieved and honoured by services. The interactions between the leading figures and the “rest of the association” can take the character of patron-client relations; the latter is at least symbolically moderated by the cultural preference for the independence and autonomy of the Bedouin man.

However, there is a clear tendency among the associations to avoid traditional obligations and to pursue strategies of power accumulation. One of the results of these practices is the rising asymmetries within a society, which has often been attributed as egalitarian (Hüsken / Roenpage 1998). In intimate conversations among friends the term *Shabaka* (network) is often used to denote the associations. This term carries a negative connotation of particularism and political dealing and is not applied in public discussions or political arenas such as regional parliaments and people congresses. The strategic modulation of kinship is obviously taking place but its legitimacy is disputed. Political practice is still contested by the cultural constructs of tribe and kinship as normative and moral models. Local debates are influenced by this discrepancy. The claim for *Adala* (Justice) and *Gadiyya* (Earnestness) characterise this controversy as well as the notion of politics *Taht it-*

Tarabeeza (Under the table) or the allegation of *Fasad* (Corruption). Interestingly, this debate is an internal one that refers to Bedouin groups and actors and is not attributed to the state.

Islamic preachers have become increasingly important for the political processes in the borderland, particularly in the field of conflict mediation. They criticise the neo-tribal associations as well as the state and promote themselves as an Islamic alternative. A politicised form of Islam, with preachers who articulate a moral and socio-political claim for leadership and comply or are even connected with other Islamic movements in the Arab world, is a relatively new phenomenon in the borderland.⁹ Today, active preachers practise in almost every bigger settlement or city such as Marsa Matruh, Sidi Barani, Al-Alamein, Saloum and Tobruk. Besides their religious and social activities, Islamic conflict mediation on the basis of the *Sharia* has become a particular domain of their engagement. Whilst on the Egyptian side this process evolves without any significant interference on the part of the state, preachers are faced with severe repression by the state and its secret police in Libya. In my current studies I am dealing with the preachers *Sheikh Mohammad* and *Sheikh Osman*. *Sheikh Mohammad*, who is around sixty years old, is an Egyptian from the Nile valley who was educated at the *Al-Azhar* University in Cairo. *Sheikh Osman*, who is around 45 years old, is a Bedouin of the *Aulad Ali*, who has been trained as a preacher in Saudi Arabia. While *Sheikh Mohammad* as an Egyptian has no tribal affiliation, *Sheikh Mohammad* has the backing of a neo-tribal association. However, both preachers are promoting an Islamic approach that explicitly attacks the ruthless competition of neo-tribal associations. The majority of their followers belong to the landless urban bedouin population. Here, younger Bedouin men between 20 and 35 years, who are just or not yet married, offer them a particularly devoted allegiance. Nevertheless, representatives of the Bedouin middle classes are also to be found among the clients of the preachers. All these people have manifold tribal and neo-tribal backgrounds. However, the anti-tribalistic rhetoric of the preachers fuels the self-perception of their followers as victims of the dealings of powerful associations. Thus the preachers and their followers constitute post-tribal, socio-religious associations in the borderland.

⁹ The first activities of this movement in Egypt occurred in the late 1980s, when followers of the Islamic preachers destroyed the shrines of holy sheikhs.

The mosque is the institutional and cultural centre of these associations. It serves as the *Sharia*-court but also hosts numerous religious and spiritual, social and political communicative processes. Whereas the disciples of the preachers are active in small local mosques, the prominent preachers such as *Sheikh Osman* travel throughout the borderland to promote their ideas among the *Aulad Ali* and other tribesmen in Egypt and Libya. On the one hand, the sermons resemble the criticism of Israel, the US and the West that is widespread in the Arab world. On the other hand, the sermons establish discourses on dignity and morals that refer to ideas of a “real” and “true” Islam. They are positioned against competing local practices such as the clientelism of the neo-tribal associations, social and economic injustice and the un-Islamic character of the states and regimes in Egypt and Libya. The activities of the preachers have significantly changed the ideas of Islam and the religious practices of the *Aulad Ali*.¹⁰ A preacher like *Sheikh Osman*, who annually travels to Saudi Arabia to receive religious advice and training, stands for the globalisation of specific Islamic ways of thought and practice that reach into the peripheries and effectively change religious, political and cultural modes.¹¹ Thus the preachers pluralise and dynamise the political landscape of the borderland by acting as producers of Islamic ideas and concepts but also as competitors for followers.

4. *Innovative Practices, Travelling Models, Public Spaces and Media*

The political order in the borderland is a specific mixture of state and not-state that is characterised by competition and the emergence of new ideas and practices. In Egypt, international development projects play an important role within this context, particularly through the export and promotion of “travelling models”¹² which have influenced local

¹⁰ This is true for Sufism, which is today totally rejected among the *Aulad Ali* in Egypt, and particularly so for various pre-Islamic practices and beliefs such as magic, healing and the cult surrounding the shrines of holy men. Even harmless aspects of Bedouin folklore such as music and dancing at weddings is nowadays considered un-Islamic. In Libya, where the activities of the preachers are hindered by the state, most of these practices still exist.

¹¹ This phenomenon is accompanied by concrete material investment such as the construction and financing of mosques and religious centres in the borderland by a variety of groups from the Gulf region.

¹² I use the term “travelling model” according to Reina (2007). A travelling model is a procedural plan and practice to identify and solve problems. Typically one finds

political ideas in specific ways. There is a certain reservation among Western scholars with regard to applying the conception of the public space¹³ to Muslim societies, and even more so to tribal Muslim societies. The debate about the genesis of new forms of media publics such as Arab satellite channels like *Al-Jezira* has certainly initiated some reassessments, but the existence and at times also the opportunity for public space free of domination are questioned. In their book on “Muslim Publics” (2004) Eickelman and Salvatore argue that a concept of public space solely related to civil society in the West does little to explain the ongoing processes in the Arab world. Instead, the authors identify a multiplicity of public spaces as typical for Arab societies. In spite of their multiplicity these public spaces nevertheless carry a significant socio-political effectiveness. In the following chapters, several examples of innovative practices and travelling models will be introduced and discussed. The role and character of public spaces will be integrated in these chapters. A particular attention is dedicated to global and local media.

Innovative Practices and Travelling Models

At first sight, the political entrepreneurs seem to act in multiple spheres and arenas that all follow a specific logic and carry distinctive practices. As *Sheikhs*, they are tribal leader and office bearer of the state at the same time. They operate within local, regional and national parliaments (Egypt) and basis- and people congresses (Libya). Whereas in Egypt the intermediate representation of Bedouin vis-à-vis the state is still predominant, the Libyan political entrepreneurs literally are the state as they function as leading public servants, heads of revolutionary committees, police officers, military generals, etc. Nevertheless, they are also

these models in the world of development, where a certain plan is designed and fabricated in development think tanks and then exported and applied in other places. See also the research project managed by Richard Rottenburg “Travelling Models in Conflict Management. A comparative research and network building project in six African countries (Chad, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Sudan)” which analyses the local adaptation/appropriation of Western models in conflict resolution applied in development. The hypothesis of the project is that generalised models about conflicts produced in the West and exported to the South shape local discourses and courses of action.

¹³ According to Habermas (1990) the public space is a medium in which the claims of the citizen are turned into public interests that evolve into governmental rules and law through the channel of parliaments. Thus it is the central momentum of the democratic rule of law in Western civil society.

part of a neo-tribal political system. Some authors have described these interlacements as starting points for the infiltration of the tribes by the state (Müller-Mahn 1989). At the end of this process the annulment of the tribes and their full integration into the modern postcolonial state was predicted. In contrast, other contributions (Hüsken / Roenpage 1998) have highlighted the persistence of the local tribal actors and in particular their flexibility and inventiveness in dealing with the state. However, recent political developments among the *Aulad Ali* reach far beyond the horizon of this debate.

Working in the above-mentioned non-tribal contexts and functions contains the confrontation with logics and practices that are oriented along globalised models of rational bureaucratic organisation and statehood in the sense of Weber. The “fact setting force” (Popitz 1992) of these logics and routines is significant. They discipline political discourse and political practice in an explicitly non-tribal direction. The answer of the Bedouin actors is the appropriation of the state apparatus, the parliaments, the people congresses and in the case of Egypt also the political parties. We are certainly dealing with ongoing dynamic and at times contradictory processes, which do not follow any kind of teleology. Thus, appropriation can also mean assimilation, adaptation and even camouflage.¹⁴ However, we are not dealing with a one-way tribalisation or “privatisation” of the state (Klute / Trotha 2004). In fact, my studies show a transformation process that changes the tribe as well as the state and induces innovations. This is where we can find the elementary character of the neo-tribal competitive order: the interlacement of tribe and state leads to innovative political forms.¹⁵ These innovations affect actors such as the political entrepreneurs, the neo-tribal associations and the state. They also affect the political logic, practices and structures in the borderland.

A typical example of these processes is the political entrepreneur Abdallah. Abdallah is the first secretary of the *Hizb Al-Watani Al-Democrati*, the National Democratic Party of Egypt (NDP) in the

¹⁴ I use the terms assimilation, adaptation and camouflage according to the definition given by the German Anthropological Association. Assimilation refers to the selective adoption of cultural imports in which the adopted ideas or things are adapted to customary ways of life and accorded alternating meanings. Adaptation to dominant orders results in a break with a group's own traditions. Camouflage highlights a strategy in which external demands are only apparently complied with, so that actors can secure sufficient latitude to pursue traditional goals.

¹⁵ Lundt (2006) uses the term “twilight institutions” to characterise similar processes.

governorate of Matruh. His position was formerly not accessible for Bedouin. In addition, Abdallah is a *Sheikh* of a sub-tribe of the *Aulad Ali* and is consequently legitimised by both the tribe and the state. In *Al-Majlis Ash-Shaabi Al-Mahalli Li Muhafazit Matruh*, the parliament of the governorate, Abdallah serves as elected member and deputy president. His portfolio is accomplished by his activities as a development broker for several projects¹⁶ and his operations in buying and selling land. Besides these intermediate and partly new positions, Abdallah acts as a renowned *Mardi* (conflict mediator) based on Bedouin customary law or *Urf* in Egypt and Libya.

The nucleus of all these functions and activities is not a “romantic traditional place”, such as the Bedouin tent or the men and guests’ room of the Bedouin house. On the contrary, it is situated in the newly renovated NDP headquarters in the city centre of Marsa Matruh in sight of the governor’s office and the complex of the security forces including the secret police. The NDP headquarters is a busy place with a constant stream of Bedouin, Egyptian public servants and party functionaries flowing in and out. Usually several men from a variety of backgrounds and with a wide range of claims are sitting in Abdallah’s office at the same time. A typical day might include the following scene: the Bedouin Secretary for Youth of the NDP and several colleagues are asking for approval for an event in the local *Markaz Ish-Shabab* (youth centre), the director of the secret police calls on the mobile phone to talk about the prosecution of a homicide case in a small Bedouin town, a public servant from the governor’s office wants to negotiate the construction of a health station in a Bedouin settlement (Abdallah has already mobilised the support of a World Bank project), Abdallah’s friend Ibrahim, a political entrepreneur himself, wants to talk about their trip to a workshop on desert agriculture in Syria, and throughout all of these discussions, two simple farmers from Abdallah’s association are waiting for financial support to buy fodder for their flock. To accomplish these diverse tasks Abdallah draws from a polyvalent repertoire that he has build up in years of political activity. The political entrepreneur connects the seemingly disparate spheres through his expert knowledge and his multi-referential social capital. The secretary

¹⁶ This is particularly true for a project of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in the years between 1990 and 2001 and for a project of the World Bank from 1998 to 2004.

for youth is advised to strengthen relations between the NDP and young people in the urban centres but is also ordered not to forget about the young men of Abdallah's tribe. The director of the secret police is assured that the Bedouin will take care of the homicide case. In return, the director of the secret police promises to refrain from any enforcement of law by the state and thus Abdallah ensures the independence of Bedouin conflict resolution without affecting the security interests of the state. The chronically under-funded public health system is connected with the resources of a development project in order to build the health station. With Ibrahim, Abdallah debates the problems of water supply in desert agriculture, and the two farmers receive subsidised fodder through an intermediary from Abdallah's association in the central agricultural cooperative in Marsa Matruh.

Even for knowledgeable experts in local politics (including social anthropologists) the kind of logic and the frame of action Abdallah uses to solve problems and create options are not always immediately recognizable. The office is not only a place of interlacement between polyvalent spheres, but also a platform for a specific innovation in which the global model of a political party is appropriated for the local arena. The mobile phone serves in this context as a new social technology.¹⁷ The political entrepreneurs usually have two or three devices of the latest fashion at their disposal. The appropriation of the mobile phone, the *Mahmul*, creates new and accelerated options in social and communicative networking for the management of politics. Nevertheless, the constant use of the *Mahmul* is also part of the cultural habit of the political entrepreneur. In this, they are only matched by the smugglers. The use of the *Mahmul* creates an air of omnipotence and super-connectedness that flatters the self-perception of the entrepreneurs.

The genesis of political innovations on the Egyptian side of the borderland is very much related to international and multilateral development projects. The development projects of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the German GTZ and the World Bank have not only provided material inputs or supported the political careers of several development brokers. They have also introduced ideas and practices, such as output-oriented cooperative and lean schemes

¹⁷ A research group headed by the Dutch social anthropologist Miriam de Bruin (African Studies Centre in Leiden) has recently carried out research on mobile phones as new social and cultural technologies in Africa.

of management with flat hierarchies and transparent decision-making processes. These travelling models brought by the development experts have been integrated into the political self-organisation of the political entrepreneurs.

The meetings of the Bedouin president of the governorate parliament in Marsa Matruh I had the honour to observe contain typical elements of the global organisational structure of a team meeting as practiced in development. The agreement on common targets, timetables and their visualisation on a flipchart, the organisation of the division of labour and a meeting procedure that contains open elements (discussion) and defined elements (decision and timetable) have little to do with traditional Bedouin organisational procedures. Here, the development projects served as a pool of potential practices and conceptions that were appropriated and adapted according to local situations and necessities. However, this process does not represent a variant of “development as prey” as Beck (1990) has pointed out, nor are we dealing with the enforcement of “specific cultural plans” (Reyna 2007) on local practices by development agencies. In fact, the case of the political entrepreneurs of the *Aulad Ali* shows that the decision about the way to deal with travelling models is made by actors on the local level.

The political entrepreneurs on both sides of the border have also applied new personnel policies that are related to experiences in development and in some cases in private companies. Thus, they operate with small teams of Bedouin university graduates of the disciplines law, business administration and engineering. These young assistants, who call themselves *Al-Jil Al-Jadid*,¹⁸ work directly with the entrepreneurs or are positioned in governmental administration, in companies and in political parties. They are actively involved at the forefront of decision-making processes. Here they enjoy the expression of their own aspirations beyond the strict Bedouin rules of generational communication that forbid a young man to speak up in the presence of an elder. Besides the term *Al-Jil Al-Jadid* they also use the word *Fariq* (Team) to describe themselves. In fact, this significant innovation breaks with traditional Bedouin traditions of authority and leadership. The educational

¹⁸ The term literally means ‘new generation’ and is an emic expression of the young assistants related to the so-called new generation of politicians surrounding Gamal Mubarak in Egypt and Gaddafi’s son Saif Al-Islam in Libya.

skills and the experience of *Al-Jil Al-Jadid* with new information technologies such as satellite television and the internet allows for participation in global discourses and practices such as decentralisation or democratisation. Thus, the new generation presents itself as reform oriented. Their political visions revolve around a post-tribalistic (in the sense of tribal factionalism) but not a post-tribal (in the sense of keeping Bedouin culture) political order in the borderland. In a group discussion with a leading political entrepreneur and his *Fariq* the young men passionately argued in favour of replacing the, in their eyes, particularistic Bedouin concept of *Assabiyya* (tribal solidarity) with the concept of *Takaful* (solidarity). According to the young politicians, this move would allow the *Aulad Ali* to overcome tribal particularism and to achieve an appropriate understanding of solidarity in relation to other groups in society. However, their claims are still embedded in the neo-tribal context: all assistants usually belong to the association of the political entrepreneur they work for. Although they are quite aware of the contradiction between their assertion and the political reality, there is a certain reservation connected with talking about the issue openly. The political vision of a post-tribalistic order is limited by a political practice shaped by the struggle for influence and power among the neo-tribal associations. In the words of a key informant, we are still dealing with *Ruh Al-Qatia*¹⁹—particularistic peer pressure.

In spite of this, the innovations discussed above do not represent a camouflage strategy in which the production of new ideas and practices is only simulated in order to pursue other ends. The process is observable and political decision-making is in fact taking place in these new contexts and not in tribal back rooms. The intense competition among the associations in Libya has certainly led to a polycentric neo-tribal structure in the state apparatus. Nevertheless, this does not mean that these domains of neo-tribal power can execute solely particularistic policies. In the words of a key informant in the Libyan city of Tobruk: “The public waterworks station we control has to guarantee the supply for the whole of Tobruk, not just for my association” (source: interview 17/11/2008). In other words, the appropriation of the state and its functions goes hand in hand with claims and demands that are oriented at the global model of statehood and public adminis-

¹⁹ *Ruh Al-Qatia* literally refers to the flock spirit of sheep.

tration. The disciplining force of the exercise of statehood is one of the interesting repercussions in the process of appropriation that leaves no actor untouched. The following citation of a leading Libyan military, tribal leader and associate of Gaddafi illustrates this assertion: “If you want to control the state and be accepted by the people, you also have to organise state services such as order and security, public health and social services” (source: interview 19/11/2008).

This statement equates to my hypothesis that today any political authority or power position, state or non-state, has to be seen in the context of “generalised statehood”, meaning that all areas of the world are occupied or at least claimed by states and every contemporary political entity is based on or related to patterns and ideas of modern statehood. Legitimacy augments, if the political order in question contains particular aspects of modern statehood, such factors as the notion of territoriality, the monopoly of violence, redistributive functions and last but not least elements of justice and equality (Klute 2004, Hüsken/Klute 2008). Those who want to rule or demand political leadership have to be able to provide meet and organise these core elements. Looking at the citizens themselves, we can also assert that expectations towards almost any political order share this perspective.

The complexity of this phenomenon is reflected in the political discourse and the articulation of new political ideas of the borderland. On both sides of the border, certain political entrepreneurs are working on the genesis of an ethno-political movement of the *Aulad Ali*. However, the integrity of the nation states of Egypt and Libya is not questioned by these actors. In fact, citizenship and tribesmanship are not viewed as being in opposition and even national preferences if not patriotism is frequently expressed, although the latter usually carries a utilitarian air. The Libyan state is generally praised because of its subsidies and free services. In Egypt on the other hand, the state is seen as more democratic and more accountable. In several group discussions in the Egyptian border town of Saloum the participating political entrepreneurs agreed that the Libyan state is shaped to far too much by the arbitrariness of Gaddafi and that the competition of the neo-tribal associations has turned state institutions into a rag rug of factions. Besides the advantages of this process: “Our people are everywhere: in the administration and in security” (Source: Interview 28/05/2008) the main disadvantage was seen in the fact that the state has lost its position as a “*primus inter pares*”, a neutral but predominant source of order vis-à-vis the competing neo-tribal groups. In

Egypt however, the state still maintains this function in the eyes of the Bedouin politicians. In the words of a leading politician of the pioneer generation: "If the state is totally tribalised we will have circumstances like in Yemen or Iraq (Source: Interview 17/05/2008).

Thus, the political entrepreneurs advocate a gradual enhancement of Bedouin political participation in both countries including the safeguarding of certain privileges in the transnational interactions of the tribal society. The contention with global political models such as decentralisation or ethnic autonomy is conducted pragmatically and attributed to local needs. The concept of statehood is not questioned but the way statehood is constructed is discussed. In the realm of practical politics, these political entrepreneurs have to face the suspicion of the states as well as the distrust of competing associations. "The political culture in the borderland is not yet ready for the integrated approach of the *Aulad Ali*" (Source: interview 12/10/2007).

I have mentioned above that the National Democratic Party (NDP) plays a particular role in the Egyptian borderland. Party membership of Bedouin has been a well-established means to enjoy certain benefits (such as the channeling of state resources through the NDP) since the 1950s. However, the making of a political career through a party and acting in local, regional and national party-political contexts is a new phenomenon. The opening of the party for local power groups recently implemented by Gamal Mubarak, the son and prospective heir of President Hosni Mubarak, is certainly a typical cooptation strategy the NDP has always applied to ensure the legitimacy of its rule.²⁰ Gamal Mubarak is preparing for the takeover of power and thus the support of the peripheries is an important factor. This task is taken quite seriously. In the winter of 2007 the NDP hosted a national party congress with delegates and party members of the entire country in a four star army-run hotel in Cairo. For the first time in history, a delegation of 120 Bedouin of the *Aulad Ali* was invited. The political entrepreneurs and their entourage in traditional Bedouin dress and with the self-confident manner of Bedouin men aroused attention and astonishment among their fellow Egyptian delegates. For the Bedouin, the congress in Cairo served as a significant symbolic empowerment and was felt to be an important and encouraging event. It shows that even political cooptation strategies are not to be seen merely as a power

²⁰ See Kienle 2001, Hüsken 2006: 23f.

politics one-way street, but as form of political interaction, that also increases opportunities for supposedly marginal groups.

Local party activities with electoral offices, meetings with protocolaric regulations and the need for a coordinated approach from the local to the regional and national level are a new experience for the Bedouin party functionaries. The monthly thematic discussion evenings of the NDP on agricultural development or youth open up a sphere of discourse and exchange that reaches beyond traditional Bedouin modes. However, it allows Bedouin claims to enter a wider framework of politics. The non-tribal logic of party activities on the other hand enables to adjust local politics to radically changing social environments. This is particularly true for the work being carried out with the Bedouin urban youth in the borderland. Here, the political party is an appropriate vehicle to integrate the heterogeneous multi-tribal age group of men between 25 and 35 years, which covers approximately two-thirds of the entire male Bedouin population in the cities. Here, we find the first indications of the transformation of the mode of political organisation from tribal to party political. For the majority of the political entrepreneurs however, the Bedouinisation of the local NDP remains the primary strategic goal. Thus, neo-tribal political competition is carried over into the NDP. In contradiction with the above-mentioned processes, this may also turn the NDP into a polycentric neo-tribal arena. Nevertheless, the examples demonstrate the deep interlacement of state, tribe, party and development. The political entrepreneur incorporates this interlacement and thus represents the composition of the local political arena.

On both sides of the borderland, political competition is also regulated by elections for parliaments, basis- and people congresses. The political entrepreneurs and their associations participate in these elections as candidates and their supporters.²¹ Although the struggle for the seats in local, regional and even national parliaments is not new to the *Aulad Ali*, the fact that political entrepreneurs nowadays have to mobilise votes beyond their own associations and respective tribal group in order to win a seat is a new development. On the one hand, this is a result of the changes that are connected with urbanization: The

²¹ The last election for the parliament of the governorate Matruh took place in April 2008. The initiative announced by Gamal Mubarak to grant real sovereignty in budgetary matters to the regional parliaments led to intensive election campaigns on the part of the associations.

emerging poly-tribal and socio-economically heterogeneous milieus of the growing centres of Marsa Matruh and Tobruk can no longer be mobilised simply by means of tribal belonging (such as *Assabiyya*). On the other hand, competition among the associations has certainly caused severe social and economic asymmetries and an increasing political fragmentation of the traditional social units of tribe, clan and lineage. In Egypt, election campaigning as a part of the public political competition between political parties and candidates belongs to the current repertoire of Bedouin politics. In Libya, this process is significantly different: political parties do not exist, the founding of parties is forbidden and campaigning is unknown. Thus, the political entrepreneurs have to bargain for votes in the forefront of elections by face-to-face relations and political arrangements. Nevertheless, elections and social dynamics have caused interesting innovations in the political field. Here, particularly the genesis of new post- or poly-tribal movements is at stake.

Appearance, promoting and arguing in public spheres has its own specific challenges. The local and regional markets and particularly the cities of Marsa Matruh and Tobruk with their shops, markets, Bedouin teahouses and restaurants host elemental processes of public societal self-information (Elwert 2000). However, these communicative processes are highly decentral and evolve within multiple interpersonal channels.²² Thus, the political discourse is many-voiced and controversial. The political entrepreneurs have to face these public spheres and their controversies. Here, they meet potential voters who do not automatically follow established patterns but want to be convinced and attracted. Thus, elections contain a great deal of uncertainty. Some of the neo-tribal associations try to reduce this uncertainty by buying votes.²³ Nevertheless, the opportunity to gain political influence through elections has also triggered entirely new forms of political organisation. In 2004, the Bedouin lawyer Mahmoud organised an election campaign in Marsa Matruh to win a seat in the national Egyptian parliament in Cairo. Mahmoud acted as an independent candidate without the support of a powerful association or a political party. This was a radical change in the political practice of the borderland. Mahmoud succeeded in mobilising the emerging group

²² See Hüsken / Roenpage 1998:167.

²³ The buying of votes is usually financed by revenues from smuggling.

of young urban male voters. These young men, with their heterogeneous tribal backgrounds and the multi-tribal urban quarters they live in share the same limitations in social, political and economical opportunities as their fellow youth throughout the Arab world (Hüsken 2008). With *As-Sawt Ash-Shabab*, the voice of the youth, Mahmoud gained a totally unexpected victory. For the first time, a charismatic political novice with an entirely new approach and no support from the NDP won a seat in the national assembly. The novelty of this process was also documented with the name *Haraka Ma Baad Al-Qabail*, as post-tribal movement, Mahmoud addressed to his endeavour. However, his political coup was turned down by an alliance of the neo-tribal groups and the Egyptian state. The government decreed a ban on Mahmoud's political activities that is still in force today. Obviously the state and the neo-tribal associations were wary if not scared of Mahmoud's new approach.

Global and Local Media

For almost five years now, Arab satellite television like *Al-Jezira* contribute to the transformation of the political field by introducing global discourses into the Bedouin households of the borderland. In addition, a big number of religious stations promote their specific interpretation of Islam. The influence of these medial public spheres is expressed by the broad politicisation of the communicative processes. The controversial discussion of the global financial crisis, Israel and the Palestinians, an interview with an Iraqi resistance fighter or debates initiated by "tv-Islam" belong to the political conversation as much as news about the global development of fodder prices for sheep. The daily consumption of television also enhances the circulation of global political ideas and models about political organization. This applies to issues such as good governance, democratisation, decentralisation and the relationship between local ethnical movements and central governments. In the visitor and men's room of the Bedouin house *Marbua* as well as in the various teahouses and restaurants the emergence of "tv-experts" and "tv-expertism" among the audiences is an increasing phenomenon. However, the Bedouin actors have only little knowledge about the selectiveness of information promoted by television. Thus, the political entrepreneurs have to face citizens highly politicised by media discourses. Besides the necessity to be up to date with the news of the world, this requires the ability to deal with generalisations and exaggerations of tv-journalism as well as to combine "tv-reality" and "tv-politics" with the local arena.

For two years now, the local political discourse in Marsa Matruh is accompanied by the monthly magazine *Watani Matruh*. The magazine is party financed by the NDP and thus follows the agenda of the party to a certain degree. Despite of this, the magazine is published and edited by Bedouins. Almost every prominent political entrepreneur around Marsa Matruh has already published articles, comments and essays in *Watani Matruh* that deal with local as well as global issues. The magazine also has a culture supplement that deals with Bedouin traditions such as poetry and new forms of cultural production like Bedouin short stories. Thus, the magazine generates a specific public space for local debates on politics as well as a certain affirmation of Bedouin culture formerly not known in the borderland. For the political entrepreneurs the publication of an essay or the initiation of a debate with article and counter-article are entirely new forms of the public communication of politics.

5. *Competitive Legal Pluralism*

Conflict resolution through Bedouin customary law or *Urf* is a central element for the integrity of the social and cultural organisation of the *Aulad Ali*. This applies to national, transnational and international relations. Like every embedded legal system, *Urf* is subject to dynamic transformation that is related to wider societal developments. At present, conflict resolution in the borderland is characterised by a variant of legal pluralism which I call “competitive legal pluralism”. Besides the phenomenon of “forum shopping” (Benda-Beckmann 1994) as a form of choice between different opportunities for conflict resolution, the term competitive legal pluralism emphasises the competition among different providers. In this market of conflict resolution we find different conceptions such as the Bedouin *Urf*, the state law and the *Sharia* courts as well as different actors such as political entrepreneurs who act as *Mardi* (mediator) with a modified *Urf*, Bedouin lawyers who operate with the state law and the preachers who execute a specific variant of the *Sharia*.

The process of mediation provides an intimate knowledge of societal processes and (power) relations. This knowledge can be transferred into other fields for strategic reasons. Conflict resolution is also a way to produce and establish a legitimate order. Those who are able to provide this form of order benefit through status and prestige as well as by a significant advancement of their power position within society. The political entrepreneurs dominate conflict resolution via the *Urf*.

They do this by introducing certain innovations of the traditional procedures.²⁴ Some parts of these procedures are nowadays shortened or even left out. However, the personalisation of the mediation process is the most significant transformation. Collective elements disappear in favour of the increased role of the *Mardi*, who frequently applies new elements of moderation and variations of traditional verdicts.²⁵ An increasing number of conflict parties choose to be represented by a *Mardi* of their own. Thus the *Mardis* become lawyers or stakeholders of their clients. They try to settle conflicts by working out a baseline for a consensus that is presented to the conflict parties. These new strategies and techniques are developed and applied due to the high frequency of conflicts, and even more so, to social change. The latter is connected to a diminishing of collective patterns of social action and responsibility, which is a direct result of competition among the neo-tribal associations. In fact, this competition is not only now taking place between tribes or clans but also within these formerly solidaric units.²⁶

The decline in solidaric obligations leads to severe problems for the resolution of conflicts. The postponement of the *Urf* procedure by changing the mediators, disobeying arbitration and the entanglement of legal and political quarrels are common features of the contemporary legal culture of the Bedouin in the borderland. In addition, the frequent overpowering of the *Urf* by mighty neo-tribal associations is at stake. This overpowering is represented by manipulations such as the bribing of the *Mardi*, political pressure on inferior associations that goes along with “financial compensation”, or the blunt threat of violence.²⁷ For weak associations the quest for justice often leads to a fundamental lack of legal security. Thus the management of conflict

²⁴ See Hüsken/Roenpage (1998).

²⁵ The traditional compensation for murder used to be blood money and the migration of the murderer and his nuclear family for one year. Nowadays the sedentarisation has put an end to this practice and blood money is regarded as sufficient.

²⁶ This is particularly true for the traditional *Amar Al-Damm*, the community of blood, which used to take the collective responsibility for the blood money. Nowadays the associations try to avoid this.

²⁷ In 2007 I witnessed a land conflict between two associations of the same clan in Al-Hamam, Egypt. One of the conflict parties had occupied a piece of land of a deceased man despite not being the legitimate heir. However, the association rejected a settlement of the conflict by means of *Urf* and declared that they would use force to defend their appropriation. Because of the size and the significant amount of armed men the association successfully overpowered the *Urf*.

resolution and its financial dimension²⁸ is both challenging and politically delicate, as it becomes a domain of the wealthy and powerful who can afford the costs and the potential political frictions.

The relation between *Urf* and the state law (including the executive security apparatus) is entirely organized by the political entrepreneurs. They are the only ones who possess the necessary social capital, knowledge and capabilities to establish a division of labour between the *Urf* and the state. The security apparatus in Egypt and Libya is predominantly interested in a “calm situation”. Thus conflict resolution is left in the hands of the *Urf* protagonists and the enforcement of state law is suspended.²⁹ In addition, the Egyptian authorities have little knowledge about Bedouin society. The social and cultural difference between the Nile Valley Egyptians and Bedouin serve as an information barrier that is scarcely compensated by the recruitment of informants.³⁰ Thus cooperation with the mediators is a vital interest of the security apparatus. In Libya, the police and the secret services are infiltrated by neo-tribal associations and political entrepreneurs. Here, the bypassing of the state law is organised within the state apparatus itself and seen as a natural habit by the actors involved.

The *Urf* also has an interesting transnational and international dimension. For a social anthropologist the transnational dimension is obvious. The *Urf* is a non-state conception and establishes a frame of order for a population that settles on the territories of two states. However, conflicts between Egyptian and Libyan *Aulad Ali* also involve the citizens of two states. Here, the *Urf* contributes significantly to law and order in the relations between the two states. This international dimension is also documented by the regulation of Bedouin labour migration between Egypt and Libya by the *Urf*, as well as legal and illegal trade and international weddings. The toleration of customary law on both sides of the borderland undoubtedly strengthens the ideology and practice of non-state conflict regulation. However, the state law

²⁸ Though mediation requires time and money for travel, the scheduling of meetings and the hearing of witnesses etc., the mediator does not receive a salary.

²⁹ The Egyptian police and the secret police stated in an interview (14/05/2008) that they refrain from enforcing the state law as long as the Bedouin keep the situation under control and the escalation of matters seems unlikely. In spite of this, even severe conflicts such as bomb attacks in the course of a land rights conflict in 2005 were not prosecuted by the police.

³⁰ Bedouin informants of the secret police tend to manipulate the authorities by intentional disinformation.

is not entirely rejected by the Bedouin. In Marsa Matruh and Tobruk, more than forty Bedouin lawyers offer their services in civil law, as solicitors or facilitators for various public services. The services of the lawyers are frequently used by the Bedouin. The core problem of the state law and its apparatus is not so much the commonplace issue of corruption as it is a lack of efficiency. Lawsuits usually take one year, even in the case of simple traffic accidents. Thus the avoidance of the state law has pragmatic rather than ideological reasons. Only in the case of capital crime such as murder or accidents with loss of life is the situation different. Here, the Bedouin systematically prevent the involvement of the state justice for ideological reasons, due to the fact that prison sentences are incompatible with the Bedouin preference for compensation rather than punishment.

The preachers attack the *Urf* and its protagonists as well as the state law and justice system from an "Islamic perspective". At the same time, they present themselves as a legal and legitimate Islamic alternative based on the *Sharia*. The mediation of conflicts usually takes place in the mosque, which acts as a *Sharia* court. The preachers serve as mediators and judges. The invoked legitimacy of the *Sharia* plays a major role in their legal practice. This religious legitimacy is positioned against the *Urf* and the state law. The manifold interlacements between the *Sharia* and the *Urf* are therefore denied and turned down by the preachers even if they are Bedouin. In addition, the preachers polarise the legal discourse and its practice by promoting the *Sharia* as the only legitimate source of law and order. For their Bedouin clients, the moral authority of the preachers' claim is quite significant. Thus, a growing number of urban Bedouin feel obliged to consult a *Sharia* court instead of the *Urf* because they want to follow an orderly Islamic way of life.

The activities of the *Sharia* courts are embedded in socio-political activities and agitations that explicitly accuse the political entrepreneurs and the state of corruption and greed for power. The current asymmetries in Bedouin society seem to support their arguments in the eyes of many. In legal practice however, the *Sharia* courts often experience limitations because typical Bedouin conflict cases such as land rights in the desert are not fully covered by the *Sharia*. In these cases, the preachers improvise the mediation but call their arbitration *Hukm ash-Sharia* (Judgement of the *Sharia*).

Competition among the preachers and the *Urf* mediators is currently increasing and has partly escalated into violent conflicts between

neo-tribal and religious associations. As well as the support of their followers the preachers can also rely on concrete material support from the Gulf region, a fact that again shows how the globalisation of Islamic models and practices reaches into the peripheries.

6. *Borders and Borderland*

The borderland of Egypt and Libya is a productive zone in which significant political and economic processes are at stake. Thus, the image of a periphery without connection to national and global developments is inappropriate. The *Aulad Ali* is a transnational tribal society that dominates the borderland between Egypt and Libya and that is directly and actively involved in national and global processes. However, Feyissa and Höhne (2008) rightly point out that the successful use of a border situation requires certain preconditions. In the case of the *Aulad Ali* these preconditions are represented by vital and interconnected neo-tribal networks of a social, political and economic nature on both sides of the border; a comprehensive trans-border system of conflict resolution on the basis of a customary law that is also compatible with other tribal populations in Libya and Egypt; a distinct cultural identity that is nowadays also used as a political asset; the currently permissive border regime of the respective states and the economic chances related to it; the political opportunities granted by the appropriation of state structures and the participation in statehood, and finally the affirmative effect of the generalisation of the neo-tribal order in Libya.

Firstly, the economic productivity of the border situation is obvious. The permissive border regime allows for uncontrolled labour migration from Egypt to Libya, a situation taken advantage of by approximately 60 percent of the Bedouin households in Egypt.³¹ The most important economic pledge in the hands of the *Aulad Ali* is the almost unlimited toleration of trans-border trade and smuggling as a substitute for comprehensive economic policies by the Libyan and Egyptian authorities. The flow of legal and illegal commodities from Libya to Egypt is widely organised, controlled and legally regulated by *Aulad Ali* Bedouin. These activities comprise petty smuggling on a daily basis, the so-called *Tujarat Ash-Shanta* (bag trading) and the professional organised smuggling of clothes from Turkey, beauty

³¹ This figure was estimated by the Bedouin director of the National Bank of Egypt in Marsa Matruh. Official numbers do not exist.

products from Italy, mobile phones and cameras from China, cigarettes and drugs. The latter are traded from the Maghreb via Libya and Egypt into the market in Israel. The *Aulad Ali* smugglers cooperate with Bedouin partners of other borderlands, namely the Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula and neo-tribal associations in the borderland between Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. In addition, they work with partners in the ports and the free trade areas in Egypt and Libya, who inform the smugglers about incoming commodities by mobile phone. The marketing of the commodities is conducted by Bedouin salesmen in Tobruk, Marsa Matruh and Cairo. In Marsa Matruh hundreds of thousands of Egyptian tourists, who spent their summer holidays in the cooler climate of the Mediterranean coast, benefit from the offers in *Suq Libya*, the Libyan market. In Cairo, customers can order particular products such as Chinese cameras in certain shops. The orders are communicated to the smugglers by mobile phone and the products are usually available within a month.

The profits of smuggling are mainly used for the economic reproduction of the neo-tribal associations, but are also channelled into the political field, for instance to finance election campaigns. The Bedouin generally speak quite openly about *Tahrib* (smuggling) but they also use ironic terms like *Tujara bidun Gumruk* (trade without customs). Some political entrepreneurs claim smuggling as *Haq Al-Aulad Ali*, the right of the *Aulad Ali*. On the one hand, this assertion sets Bedouin claims over the rights of the state; on the other, it is a pragmatic response to the painful absence of economic alternatives.

The practicalities of smuggling are usually conducted by the young men of an association aged between 20 and 40, while the elders act as coordinators in the background. The young men establish a subculture of smugglers that is recognisable by certain habits and a distinctive performative practice. Bravery, readiness to take risks and a certain romanticism of illegality belong to this subculture, as well as the demonstration of wealth by expensive clothes, several mobile phones of the latest fashion and the possession of big American four-wheel-drive vehicles. Another very interesting cultural aspect is represented by short movies or video clips made by the smugglers using the video device of their mobile phones. The central issue of these movies (which are sometimes accompanied by Bedouin music) is the act of smuggling and the illegal crossing of borders. The video clips are exchanged (via Bluetooth) and circulated among the smugglers. The more spectacular and illegal the content is the more desirable the clip becomes.

Here, the appropriation of a new technology seems to initiate an iconographical discourse that reaches beyond the above-mentioned effects on political management or the organisation of smuggling networks by mobile phone.

The economic productivity of the borderland is accompanied by certain political advantages. Firstly, the existence of two radically different state systems increases the number of political settings and chances of appropriation the Bedouin can use to pursue their ends. Thus, the willingness to subordinate oneself under one state system and to become an obedient citizen is replaced by the opportunity of choice. Claims on the part of the states can be rejected by crossing the border. Political problems or conflicts with state authorities can be anticipated by disappearing into the tribal context on the other side of the border. Thus, the Leviathan loses a significant amount of its domination over the citizen. In addition, the neo-tribal structure of Libyan society has affirmative effects on the *Aulad Ali* in Egypt. Contrary to other tribal groups such as the Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula, who are confronted with two explicitly non-tribal societies in Egypt and Israel, the *Aulad Ali* can experience themselves as part of a transnational social and cultural continuum.

Outlook

The role of tribes and neo-tribal groups in North Africa is often discussed under the premise of a “primordialisation of politics” (Werenfels 2008). Tribes are seen as competitors of the state or as agents of a “re-traditionalisation of politics” (Chabal / Dalos 1999; Kassimir 2001). Sometimes tribes are qualified as a “general obstacle to development” (Al-Kikhia 1997). The analysis of domination and rule without and beside the state has had a long tradition in Social Anthropology, starting with the work of Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940). In the 1960s, Sigris (1964) argued against the thesis of the universality of the state. Furthermore, he emphasised the capability of stateless societies to evolve and organise social change despite the arguments of the theory of modernisation.³²

Regarding the findings of my research, I cannot find any argument for the existence of an antagonism between tribes and the state, nor

³² This refers to the thesis of Dahrendorf (1964), that societies need centralised institutions in order to develop.

can I support the argument of primordialisation or retraditionalisation. While other borderlands seem to be shaped by a “heterarchy” (Hüsken/ Klute 2008) of different organisational systems, the case of the *Aulad Ali* places appropriation, interlacement and innovation at the centre of the political process. The example of the neo-tribal competitive order shows how global and local models can become elements of this innovative process. The *Aulad Ali* creates a transnational system of order that transforms elements of statehood and tribal traditions into a unique practice. This system of order is obviously not in accordance with theoretical models of development derived from European history such as state-governance, the legal state and democracy. However, this does not mean that these models may not be integrated into the local theory and practice of politics. Nevertheless, the decision about this is made on the local level by local actors and not by development planners somewhere in Western ministries or think tanks.

The case of the *Aulad Ali* documents how vital, unique and at the same time interconnected with the world a local political practice can be. Naturally, we are dealing with ongoing, dynamic processes. The questions as to where the appropriation of the state by the neo-tribal associations will lead, and if an ethno-political movement of the *Aulad Ali* will really emerge, cannot be answered at present. They will, however, be the subject of studies in the future.³³

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³³ See also the book “Beside the State. Emergent Powers in Contemporary Africa” by Georg Klute and Alice Bellagamba (2008b).

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Anthony Asiwaju is a professor of history at the African University Institute in Imeko, Nigeria. He is a member of the Ogun State Elders' Council. He is also chairperson of the Advisory Council of the African Union's Border Programme. Asiwaju is also a member of ABORNE, the African Borderland Research Network. Among others he has published *Boundaries and African Integration: Essays in Comparative History & Policy Analysis* (2003). He is editor of *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884–1984* (1985) and co-editor of *African Boundaries. Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (1996).

David Coplan is professor at the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand University, South Africa. He is a member of ABORNE, the African Borderland Research Network. His work includes *In Township Tonight!* (2nd ed., 2007); *Lyrics of the Basotho Migrants* (1995); and *In the Time of Cannibals: Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants* (1994).

Ulf Engel is a professor of 'Politics in Africa' at the Institute of African Studies, University of Leipzig, Germany. He is a member of the board of AEGIS and spokesperson of the DFG Research Training Group on 'Critical Junctures of Globalisation'. His recent work includes co-edited volumes on *Towards an African Peace and Security Regime* (2009), *Negotiating Regions: The Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and Africa* (2008) and *African Alternatives* (2007).

Allen M. Howard is a professor at the Department of History, Rutgers University, USA, with an interest in African history and Atlantic history. His recent work includes a co-edited volume, *The Spatial Factor in African History. The Relationship of the Social, Material, and Perceptual* (2005), as well as *Cities in Africa/Les villes en Afrique* (a special issue of the Canadian Journal of African Studies; 2003).

Thomas Hüsken is a research associate with the *Institut für Ethnologie* at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, where he works in a research

project on the emergence of non-state forms of rule in contemporary Africa. He is a member of ABORNE, the African Borderland Research Network. Hüsken is editor of *Youth, Gender and the City. Social-anthropological Explorations in Cairo* (2007).

Paul Nugent is Director of the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom. He is also head of ABORNE, the African Borderland Research Network, and president of AEGIS, the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies. He published *Africa since Independence* (2004) and is also co-editor of *Making Nations, Creating Strangers: States and citizenship in Africa* (2008), *Ethnicity in Ghana: The limits of intervention* (2001) and *African Boundaries. Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (1996).

Timothy Raeymaekers is research fellow and a member of the Conflict Research Group at Ghent University, Belgium. Among others he co-authored *Food security responses to the protracted crisis context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo* (2006) and *Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo* (2004).

Joris Schapendonk is PhD fellow at the Department of Human Geography at Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands. He has published on migration and remittances in Northern Africa. His PhD is on the non-linearity of migration and its development implications, thereby focusing on African (transit) migration towards Europe.

Fredrik Söderbaum, a political scientist, is director of the Centre for African Studies as well as the Global Studies programme at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Recently co-authored titles include *The Role of Civil Society in Global Governance: The case of Eastern and Southern Africa* (2008), *The Future of Regionalism* (2008) and *Afro-regions: The dynamics of cross-border micro regionalism in Africa* (2008).

Ian Taylor is a professor of international relations with the School of International Relations at St. Andrews, United Kingdom. Recent monographs include *China and Africa: Engagement and Compromise* (2009). He also co-edited *Afro-regions: The dynamics of cross-border micro regionalism in Africa* (2008) and *The New Multilateralism in South Africa's Diplomacy* (2006).

Koen Vlassenroot is a professor and coordinator of the Conflict Research Group at Ghent University, Belgium. Among others he co-authored *Food security responses to the protracted crisis context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo* (2006) and *Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo* (2004).

INDEX

- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 7, 90, 102, 105–107
- Africa 3, 5, 11–12, 71, 87, 113
- Pan-African 50
- Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies, AEGIS 1, 207–208
- African Borderland Research Network, ABORNE 4
- African Economic Community, AEC 50
- African Studies 1, 2
- African Union, AU 90–91
- African Union Border Programme, AUBP 90–91
- New Peace and Security Architecture 5
- Agnew, John 2, 4, 12, 52
- Ahosi 19
- Al-Gaddafi, Muammar 176
- Al-Jezira 183, 193
- Alliance de la Majorité Præsidentielle, AMP 160
- Ana, Antonio López de Santa 74
- Asante 18, 50
- Association of European Border Regions, AEBR 90, 105
- Aulad Ali 172
- Balanta (see also) Guinea-Bissau 17, 19
- Bamba, Shaykh Ahmadu 32
- Basotho 74, 75, 76–78
- Benin 15, 94, 106, 169–170
- Berlin West Africa Conference 109
- Border demarcation 103, 105–106
- Afregios 7, 90
- Border theory 7, 72
- Borderland studies 4
- Cross border cooperation 103–106
- Botswana 25
- Bracero program 81–82
- Brenner, Neil 2
- Britain 20
- Bugandan clans 18
- Capitalism 27, 31, 161
- Cassirer, Ernst 1
- Christians 11, 24
- Clientelism 56, 59, 61, 63, 160
- Climate change 3
- Cold War, end of 141, 148, 151, 169
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, COMESA 47, 54, 58
- Criminal and terrorist networks 3
- Dahomey 19, 94
- Decentralisation 145, 165, 188, 190, 193
- Decolonisation 147
- Democracy 34, 62, 82, 169, 201
- Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC 119, 161
- De-territorialisation 5–6, 85
- Diaspora 4, 64–65
- Dictatorship 31, 153, 161, 165
- Dutch East India Company 20
- Egypt 8, 100, 117, 170
- Ethnicity 13, 48, 143, 171, 208
- European Union, EU 72, 89, 90, 104
- Amsterdam Treaty 89
- Euregios 7, 90
- European Economic Community 98
- Maastricht Treaty 89
- Schengen Agreement 89
- Forced removals 27
- Frelimo 62–63
- Gabon 18, 119
- Gender 5, 13, 80, 107, 208
- Ghana 15, 24, 30, 34, 90, 102, 131, 119, 208
- Globalisation 46–47, 50, 58, 63, 65–66
- Governance 67, 155, 157–158, 164, 193, 201
- Great Lakes Region 46, 141, 153
- Guinea-Bissau 17
- Hinojosa, Felipe de Jesus Calderon 83
- HIV/AIDS 33–334
- Indigenous 4, 16, 24, 29, 32, 37, 61, 93–95, 126
- International Monetary Fund, IMF 31
- Islamic law 16

- Kabila, Joseph 156
 Kabila, Laurent-Désiré 141, 153
 Kenya 3, 34, 141
 Kocka, Jürgen 110
 Konare, Alpha Oumar 99
 Kwaito 36
- Lesotho 7, 18, 26, 29, 73–75
 Libya 125, 129, 132, 169
 Localisation 141
 Lumumba, Patrice 142
- Maasai 17
 Macro-regions 45, 47, 51
 Maputo Development Corridor, MDC
 49, 61–62
 Mawu 15, 24
 Micro-regions 6–7, 45
 Migration 4–5, 113
 Migrant labourers 11
 Migration studies 4, 129
 Stepwise migration process 113–115
 Temporary migrant 115, 117, 130
 Transit migration 115–118
 Mining 25, 27–28, 34, 82, 150, 157
 Missionaries 22–24, 28–29
 Mobutu, Désiré 141–142
 Mulele, Pierre 142
 Murrieta, Luis Donaldo Colosio 83
 Muslims (see also) Islamic law 11, 15,
 24
- Namibia 173
 Nasser, Gamal Abdel 25
 Nation state 140, 147, 150–151
 Nationalism 2, 30, 85, 90, 97, 141,
 146–147, 176
 National identities 11, 72
 Nationality 13, 34, 75, 84–85, 152
 Neoliberalism 49, 57, 59, 61
 Neopatrimonialism 48–49, 54, 56, 59,
 65
 Networks 3, 162, 169, 171, 173,
 176–177, 198, 200
 New Regionalism 5–6, 48
 New Regionalism Approach, NRA
 51–54
 Niger Delta 35
 Nkunda, Laurent 161
 Non-state actors 51, 161, 169, 170, 172
 North-America 31, 45, 49, 104
- Organisation of African Unity, OAU
 54, 91, 100–101
- Paasi, Anssi 2
 Periurban 29, 34–35
 Place 11
 Non-places 59
 Political science 2, 6, 31, 177
 Politics of belonging 3
 Post-Washington consensus 58
 Prescott, J.R.V. 93, 95
 Primordialisation 177, 200–201
 Privatization 150, 163
 Puntland 3
- Race 13, 30, 36, 75–76, 79
 Radical Islam 4
 Rassemblement Congolais pour la
 Démocratie, RCD 53, 154
 Refugees 31, 35, 46, 113, 123, 133, 152
 Regionalization 7, 45–47, 53–54, 141,
 169
 Shadow regionalization 53–54
 Regions 90, 92, 98, 101, 106
 Region builders 52
 Regional Economic Communities,
 REC 103–104
 Regional identities 11
 Regional integration 5, 7, 53, 56, 59,
 108
 Resource Mobilization 7, 90, 103
 Rwandan genocide 153
- Slaves 17, 19–20, 75
 Social groups 3, 6, 107, 157
 Social networks 8, 20, 29, 115,
 121–124, 128, 131
 Somalia 3, 119, 131, 141, 169
 Somaliland 3, 172
 South Africa 5, 7, 22, 25
 Southern African Development
 Community, SADC 47, 54, 58
 South-South relations 47, 54, 58
 Sovereignty 67–68, 71, 84–85, 94, 97,
 101, 109, 140–141
 Space 11, 45
 Analytic space 12
 Gendered spaces 5
 Media space 4
 New social space 5
 Physical space 4, 12
 Religious space 4
 Respacing Africa 1
 Space forming 13, 29
 Space maintaining 13
 Spatial organisation 2, 24
 Spatial reordering 4

- Spatial turn 1–2
- Symbolic space 4
- Spatial Development Initiatives, SDI 45, 58
- State 3–4, 45, 139
 - State building 15, 57, 165
 - Unitary state 50
 - Weberian state 47
- Subsistence economy 80
- Sudan 16, 119, 131, 141, 154
- Sustainable development 89, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 102
- Territorialisation 2, 6
- Togo 119
- Trade 17, 19–20
 - Atlantic slave trade (see also) slaves 17
 - Legitimate trade 15
 - Traders 17, 19–20
 - Transborder trade 160, 174
- Transnationalisation 65–66, 141
- Transport Transit Corridor Authority, TTCA 62
- Underdevelopment 50, 79, 80
- United Nations, UN 27, 55, 105
- United States of America, USA (see also) North America 71–72, 80–81
- Verwoerd, Hendrik 81
- Violence 155–156
- Walikale 157, 159
- War 15–16
 - Warlords 15
- World Bank 31, 185–186
- World Trade Organisation, WTO 58
- Xenophobia 82, 84
- Young, Crawford 163, 186
- Zaire (see also) DRC 142–143, 145–146
- Zairianisation 146
- Zambia 25, 34, 173
- Zimbabwe 15, 26, 34, 65, 141

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