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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 historicality 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 century, i.e. at a time when the nation-state was successfully established as the dominant regime of territoriosity (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 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 Asiwaju 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. Neumann 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 resspacing 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: ‘Tétat 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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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.
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 bye-passed the dominant spatial patterns in order to trade, become military recruits, or escape
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
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. 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

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

References


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
(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 (Fourutan 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,
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 (Boas 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
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
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 Corridor

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.

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


Harrison, G. 1999. 'Corruption as "Boundary Politics": The State, Democratisation, and Mozambique's Unstable Liberalisation', *Third World Quarterly* 20, 3.


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 rundown capital—along their entire roughly rectangular length. In contrast there is the mighty trail of the US-Mexico borderlands, almost
'third world' meets developed 'first world' face-on-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/New 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 entrepots, what the Mexicans, faced by high border fences and walls, call *ciudads tramponins* ('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
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
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’: 'Piti le 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 (Copland 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 (Zufiiga 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
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 unremitting 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
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 Llivia, a Spanish settlement across the Franco-Spanish border in France, completely surrounded by French villages.

The point has been elaborately made elsewhere (cf. Asiwaju 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
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 grassroots 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 problematicities, 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.
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 topically 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
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: 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

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

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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.
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. 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

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1 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.
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:

... wherever 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
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:

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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; Maryse and Reynjens 2005), others suggest that the civil war actually started earlier, with the introduction of “democratic” political competition during the years of the Conference Nationale Souveraine (Vlassenroot 2002; see also Willame 1992; Bratton and Van de Walle 1994).
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