

Panel N: Mobility and relocation as strategies of youthful resistance (chair: Morten Bøås and Mats Utas)

Africa is the most youthful continent in the world, but also a continent where age matters and the lives and destinies of young people still may remain in the hands of elders and the tradition and authority that they master. Young people find different ways of coping with this aspect of their life-world. Some remain silent, some adapt and navigate, whereas some also openly resist. Every one of these strategies embodies possible paths of resistance: from the silent and covert, through pragmatic navigation to the open resistance of just suddenly leaving ones household and homestead some day (in one way or another). This panel session offers analyses from different disciplines and geographical parts of Africa (diasporas included) on the full range of mobility strategies – from the silent relocation based on household decision-making to the young men (and women) who deliberately (at least for a time) choose the (violent) life-world of the hyper-vagabond.

1) Mats Utas (Nordic Africa Institute)

2) Nathaniel King (Max-Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle / Saale, Germany and Martin Luther University, Germany): Place Giving Utility to Space: Marginal Secret Societies Performing Sierra Leone's Youth Complex

In my paper, I will look at how youth, expressive of space, and marginal secret societies are employed as 'vectors' (de Certeau: 1984: 17); and how place roots and routes power that is generated at the margins of Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown. In Sierra Leone, 'youth' is not a transitory stage between infancy and adulthood: rather, it is a state of social and economic inability. Youth, in Sierra Leoneans' lived experiences then, is an embracing of childhood, adulthood and, even old age (King, 2007). These said youth are not passive to their circumstantial youthdom; but actively striving to graduate to socio-economic adulthood. The means to this end could be varied and creative, including exploiting the socio-economic-politically powerful. One of the potent ways that these youth exert their social relevance is by becoming members of marginal secret societies. Since established secret societies set minimum social and economic requirements for membership, the socio-economic youth have created their own secret societies. And because of the size and functionality of this 'youth membership', which also brackets female youth, socio-economically powerful 'adult' Sierra Leoneans, especially politicians, are clamouring to become members of these marginal secret societies, to enable them to win elections, for example. My findings show that one of the most powerful of these marginal secret societies, Firestone, has one major advantage over the others: land that it wrestled from Freetown authorities in the 1960s. From this place, it weaves a web of relationships- and esoteric knowledge-based power and is beginning to perform the State on the land that founds this power. Summatively, the findings show that Firestone uses space and place, dependent on time and purpose, to displace and accommodate the State, hence deriving power from the heart of powerlessness –the margins.

3) Morten Bøås and Ingunn Bjørkhaug (Fafø - Institute for Applied International Studies; Norway): DDRed in Liberia: remobilisation as reintegration?

This article questions mainstream approaches to the reintegration of youthful ex-combatants. In Liberia, the disarmament and demobilization was implemented quite effectively, but several questions can be asked about the components of reintegration and rehabilitation in the DDR-process. Most ex-combatants are currently unemployed or underemployed as the

programmes initiated first and foremost prepared them for jobs that did not exist. The programmes also worked from the assumption that wartime experiences, networks and command structures had to be broken down as they were seen as counterproductive to peace and reconciliation. Drawing on previous research in Liberia the hypothesis is that reintegration can better be achieved through peaceful remobilization that allows the ex-combatants to make use of the skills, experiences and networks gained through the war. This is illustrated by the recent experience of a nightwatch patrol in Voinjama in Lofa County that was based on rank and command structure from the war which responded to local community demands and filled a security vacuum. This is an alternative path to reintegration that needs further analysis, and the article argued that this should be based on the premises of a genuine understanding of the background of Liberia's young ex-combatants and the nature and form of their involvement in violent conflict. Many people were involved in the war, but most only fought for certain periods. The motivations for joining varied, but the collected data from our various studies shows that security considerations were among the most important factors. Most combatants were ordinary people who joined for the sake of protection for themselves, their families and their communities. DDR in Liberia, as elsewhere, is, however, built on the assumption that there is something particularly dangerous and marginalised about the group of people who constituted the rank-and-file of the factions involved in the war. This is, as we have seen, not necessarily the case. DDR is very much a reaction to the notion that these people are unattached to society, set apart in their own world, and therefore needs particular attention. The article will therefore suggest that DDR approaches are in dire need of a rethinking that links them more directly to programmes aimed at social cohesion and societal security.

4) Tatek Abebe (NTNU, Norway): 'Youth' and 'participation' in urban Africa

This paper draws on a review of literature on the social, economic and political contexts of youth participation in urban Africa. Situating 'youth' in the context of rapid urbanization, the paper examines the role and place of 'participation' in young people's lives. Despite the momentum in the rhetoric of youth participation/activism for social change, less attention has been paid within academia to the political context in which such transformation is sought. The paper will be informed by political economic approach; analyzing selected urban development projects and when, how and why youth participation is/becomes meaningful and how young people perceive it. The paper is part of an on-going research at Norwegian Centre for Child Research (financed by UN-Habitat) that appraise the current state of art of policy-oriented research and scholarship on youth and urbanization, and the place/role of young people in urban development initiatives in the global South.

5) Trond Waage (University of Tromsø, Norway): Criminality or respectability? Young immigrants in Ngaoundéré, a fast growing city in northern Cameroon

Due to warlike situations in its neighbour countries, and to climate change, are living conditions in and around Cameroon becoming increasingly more difficult. All the major cities in the region are experiencing a rapid population growth. Ngaoundéré, the city where I work have grown from 40 to 400 000 in less than 30 years. Only 60 years ago was the Sultan in Ngaoundéré sending out his men to capture slaves, today are young people coming in large numbers to search for jobs. Most of them are poor young men, with little formal education, they speak only some French or Fulani (major languages in northern Cameroon) and they come with little knowledge about what life is like in the city. Criminality is an increased problem and politicians in Ngaoundéré have a feeling of loosing control over the security

situation. Writers on urban youth in Africa are today concerned with criminality and illegitimate social orders. I profoundly agree with Biaya (2005) that claims: “it is often against the state and their own society that the youth must live, (...) whether illegal or not, because the law no longer functions”. But with my empirical experience I question that: “Illegality has become the norm for young people (in African cities)”. This paper describes a milieu of young men coming from Niger, Chad and the Central African Republic to one of the many street corners in Ngaoundéré, where there are a water-tap and youth work with water distribution. They rent handcarts in the quarter and use them for transporting water, but also other goods as sofas, groceries, construction materials. In my PhD fieldwork in 1998 was I working with 7 different youth milieus in Ngaoundéré. I did a new 6 months fieldwork in 2009, where I have been shooting a documentary/anthropological film on these water transporters. Many of the youths in 1998 are now, in their late twenties, still working with handcarts, still not having their place to live, not in a stable relationship, not having enough to eat, but are constantly receiving youths from their village which they have to take care of, and they are not thinking of going back “home”. Through this paper will I contribute to a analysis of the various ways of adapting among the extreme poor in a fast growing African city, where the most “successful” are those living lives that are perceived as respectful and legitimate by the local/native population. They are conducting the work of the former slaves and as such contributing to both reproducing the ancient social system but also to social stability and security in the quarter. Those who “choose” illegitimate life strategies are forced to move on, to the next quarter or the next city.

6) Christian Vium (University of Copenhagen, Denmark): CLANDESTINE

The project **CLANDESTINE** is an ongoing documentary project about clandestine migration from West Africa to France. I wish to explore and expose the hardship endured throughout the journey, from village to metropole, via the Sahara desert and the Atlantic and Mediterranean. It is a photography- and video-based account of the long and perilous journey during which the clandestine migrants must denounce themselves and become *nobody* in order to become *somebody* in a world devoid of recognizable denominators. The immediate drama of the actual crossing is mirrored in a profound psychological and symbolic journey. The crossing represents a *rite of transition*, in which the young migrants are suspended in an existential no man’s land. Between adolescence and adulthood. Between the familiar and the foreign. Between life and death. Between Africa and Europe. In its essence, it is a project about prolonged human liminality. It is a story of modern heroes who sacrifice their lives for their families in an age of profound individuality. I propose an approach, in which the preferred mode of signification is ‘*fragmentation* and *dissassembly*’ (Bieman 2006, my emphasis), rather than the simple and streamlined perfect image proposed by the public media. For the purpose of the panel ‘Mobility and relocation as strategies of youthful resistance’, I wish to present audiovisual case examples from this ongoing project, along with some methodological considerations on working with visual anthropology. Theoretically, I will focus on the way in which young migrants continually negotiate their position within a dynamic translocal landscape essentially composed by the multiple strategies employed by these migrants and the networks they engage in. Migration as a vehicle of transformations in intergenerational relationships, in sending and receiving environments, constitutes a central theme in this discussion.

7) Kaisa Hallberg Adu (University of Ghana): “On a course to Migrate? Migration Culture and Migration Industry on Campuses in Ghana”

Along with the globalization of labor markets, the higher education sector has also become internationalized, with student mobility being one of its most important aspects. The advancement of targeted study and work permits reveals a tangible scramble for talent. Highly educated migrants - in this proposed study Ghanaian tertiary students – are targets for the so-called *migration industry*, consisting of on-campus agencies, companies and foreign government bureaus with the distinct aim of facilitating student migrations. Currently there are few bi- or multilateral agreements and no international regulations on north-to-south recruitment leaving an “open field” for extractions of the highly-skilled. At the same time, the international community places the responsibility for the emigrations on the sending countries which are simultaneously struggling with rapidly increasing demands for higher education. Hence; through demands from the knowledge-intensive Western labor markets, the internationalization of higher education combined with limited opportunities at home, more tertiary students from developing countries than ever before receive education, and later live and work, outside their home countries. The higher education sector in Ghana, as in other African countries, is itself in crises due to a high and increasing demand for education, combined with a small and ageing group of lecturers. The basic requirement for producing quality higher education is highly qualified staff. With the current rate of expansion and failure to attract or maintain younger, fully qualified lecturers, there are not enough academics to ensure quality in the African universities. Evidently, a large proportion of Ghanaian students and degree holders do not live and work in Ghana, with serious consequences for Ghanaian society and development. This paper seeks to examine (local) campus culture of emigration; its practices and influences by transnational migration industry.