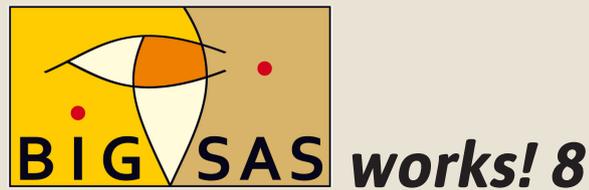


# 18

Bayreuth African Studies  
**WORKING PAPERS**



**Living in African Cities:**

**Urban Spaces, Lifestyles  
and Social Practices in  
Everyday Life**

Azza Mustafa Babikir Ahmed, Delia Nicoué, Johanna Rieß, Johanna Sarre, Florian Stoll

# 18

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## **Living in African Cities: Urban Spaces, Lifestyles and Social Practices in Everyday Life**

**Azza Mustafa Babikir Ahmed, Delia Nicoué, Johanna  
Rieß, Johanna Sarre, Florian Stoll, 2018**

# Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers

The Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Bayreuth promotes and coordinates African studies in 12 subject groups distributed over the six faculties of the University of Bayreuth. It coordinates research and teaching, training junior researchers, and promotes the exchange of information between persons and institutions engaged in research and teaching in or on Africa.

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# Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS)

Since the year 2007, BIGSAS is part of the competitive 'Excellence Initiative' by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the German Council of Science and Humanities (WR). The basic aims of BIGSAS are to bring together excellent young African and non-African scholars to work jointly in the field of African Studies and to offer a center of creative and innovative PhD training and research. On 15th June 2012, BIGSAS was one of the successful DGF funded 'Centers of Excellence' which were granted support for the next 5 years. BIGSAS has more than 100 junior fellows from 25 African, American, Asian and European countries. BIGSAS builds on this experience and offers a multi- and interdisciplinary research environment based upon three clearly defined general Research Areas which are:

- Uncertainty, Innovation and the Quest for Order in Africa
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# **BIGSASworks!**

With BIGSASworks! we aim at offering Junior Fellows at the Graduate School of African Studies a platform for publishing research-related articles. This new online-working paper series provides an excellent platform for representing and promoting the idea of BIGSAS. It opens a space for showcasing ongoing research, creating transparency of the work carried out by Junior Fellows and providing a space for present articles and working jointly on them towards further publication. Each issue focuses on a certain thematic field or theoretical concept and Junior Fellows from any discipline are invited to submit papers, enabling common interests beyond the predetermined BIGSAS research areas to flourish. At the same time BIGSASworks! offers its workgroup participants deeper insights into and practical experience of what it means to be an editor. Last but not least, BIGSASworks! makes BIGSAS and its research(ers), (i.e. us!), visible before our theses are published.

The name BIGSASworks! had various implications when we first chose it. First and foremost, it is an abbreviation of “BIGSAS Working Papers!” Secondly, it is meant to show the work of our BIGSAS “work groups”, so indeed it is the works that are resulting from a structure like BIGSAS. Thirdly, taking “works” as a verb, it demonstrates the work that we as BIGSAS Fellows carry out, with BIGSASworks! guaranteeing us a visible output in addition to our theses.

## Our latest BIGSASworks! publications

<b>Title</b>	<b>Editor(s)</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>	<b>Version</b>
Living in African Cities: Urban Spaces, Lifestyles and Social Practices in Everyday Life	Azza Mustafa Babikir Ahmed, Delia Nicoué, Johanna Rieß, Johanna Sarre & Florian Stoll	2018	18 (8)
Perspectives on Translation Studies in Africa	Uchenna Oyali	2017	17 (7)
Religion and Space: Perspectives from African Experiences	Serawit Bekele Debele & Justice Anquandah Arthur	2016	15 (6)
Actors, Institutions and Change: Perspectives on Africa	Matthew Sabi & Jane Ayeko-Kümmeth	2015	13 (5)
Challenging Notions of Development and Change from Everyday Life in Africa	Girum Getachew Alemu & Peter Narh	2013	11 (4)
The Making of Meaning in Africa: Word, Image, Sound	Duncan Omanga & Gilbert Ndi Shang	2013	10 (3)
Trends, Discourses and Representations in Religions in Africa	Meron Zekele & Halkano Abdi Wario	2012	9 (2)
Women's Life Worlds 'In-Between'	Antje Daniel, Katharina Fink, Lena Kroeker & Jaana Schuetze	2011	7 (1)

## About the Authors

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# Acknowledging the Reviewers of this Volume

As authors and editors of this volume of BIGSASworks!, we wish to express our sincerest gratitude to the many renowned scholars who donated their time, energy and support to this publication. **Prof. Dr. Katja Werthmann** (University of Leipzig) and **Prof. Dr. Eberhard Rothfuss** (University of Bayreuth) read and commented on the earliest versions of the call for papers and subsequent abstracts; their feedback gave direction to the volume at an early stage, for which we are very thankful. A debt of gratitude is owed to **Prof. Dr. Dieter Neubert** (University of Bayreuth) who accompanied the project over the course of two years with advice and feedback.

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The team of editors

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# Living in African Cities: Urban Spaces, Lifestyles and Social Practices in Everyday Life

## Introduction

**Azza Mustafa Babikir Ahmed, Delia Nicoué, Johanna Rieß, Johanna Sarre, Florian Stoll**

Cities and urban life have become more and more important on the African continent. Between 1995 and 2015, Africa's urban growth rate has been the highest in the world, over ten times faster than in Europe. With an average annual 3.4% population growth between 1995 and 2015, African cities had the highest urbanization growth rate worldwide (UNHABITAT 2016: 7).

Infrastructural development seems to fail to cope with this rapid urbanization, as exemplified by the number of people living in 'slums' in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has risen from 93,203 in 1990 to 200,677 in 2014 according to UN figures (UNHABITAT 2016: 58). Consequently, among all continents, Africa displays "the highest levels of persisting urban inequality" (UNHABITAT 2016: 18). According to the figures, life in Sub-Saharan Africa's cities is characterized by deficiencies of all kinds: In 2010, the average urban sanitation rate stood at only 54%, only 32% of urban households had access to electricity in 2011 (UNHABITAT 2016: 89).

On a more positive note, African cities seem to provide opportunities too. For example, "urban employment grew by an average of 6.8% over the last decade" (UNHABITAT 2016: 33), more than twice the rate of national employment figures which stood at 3.3% in the same decade (UNHABITAT 2016: 33). This is despite an overall dire economic situation in which the overall number of people living in extreme poverty (rural and urban) on the African continent has risen from 205 million in 1981 to 414 million in 2012 (UNHABITAT 2016: 30).<sup>1</sup>

However, the regional summary in the UNHABITAT report reads like a list of short-comings: African cities display

"rapid recent urbanization, fueled by rural migration, with weak capacity to respond to the demands for housing, infrastructure, decent employment and social services. Lack of manufacturing is coupled with scarce public services and severe poverty. (...)

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<sup>1</sup> While these numbers might suggest some overall trends, questions remain about the quality of data and the applicability of continent-wide generalizations. Even the UN report itself asserts, e.g. for the case of income inequality, that the information available is "scant" (UNHABITAT 2016: 75).

Employment is mostly informal, featuring low profitability and weak job creation potential. Therefore, the urgent need for economic transformation calls for job creation and improved electricity, water, and sanitation supplies, with basic services and infrastructure improving densities, and attendant energy and greenhouse emissions savings." (UNHABITAT 2016: 173)

Yet, these statistics do not tell much about how people live in urban African contexts.

At this point it is worth noticing that beyond the conceptual bias which tends to look at African cities at a macro level or as the stage on which traditional tribal practices from rural areas are reproduced, there are meaningful anthropological and sociological studies which attempt to direct the focus on African cities and urban spaces as spaces of creativity and invention of new cultural forms (Cohen 1969, Mitchell 1956). The early research of the 1950s and 1960s (and even earlier) had been ground-breaking. The work of Hellman (1948) on some aspects of social life in a slum in Johannesburg, and Wilson's (1941; 1942) account on the African migrants' lifestyle in the towns of the Copperbelt, were important bases for most research that followed, mainly anthropologists in African towns (Frankel 1964; Little 1965; Mayer 1961; Mitchell 1956). The colonial era inspired writers like Southall (1988) to suggest his dichotomy of pre-colonial and colonial towns in Africa. Later on, socio-political movements, struggle for independence, and refiguring African nations, inspired early (Marxist) Africanist writers to revisit the early works of *Central and South African Towns* (Magubane 1973), illustrating how early studies strip African towns of their colonial mode of production. Yet, while these new urban centers that have emerged in different parts of Africa have been perceived and analyzed as places where a dynamic cultural creativity, innovation and production of art and fashion can be witnessed (Förster 2013, Obrist 2013), many studies also give priority to the search for anomalies, crisis and pathologies – both within urban societies and in the organizational structure of space itself (see among others: Abebe 2008; Bähre 2000, 2007; Bethlehem 2005; Cooper 1983; Davis 2006; De Boeck / Plissart 2004; Förster 2013: 235; Le Marcis 2004; Mbembe and Nuttall 2004; Murray / Myers 2006; Obrist 2013: 10; Philipps 2013; Place 2004; Simone / Abouhani 2005).

City planning, urban development and politics in contemporary Africa play also a fundamental role in the discussion on cities. There are excellent studies on changing urban structures and demographics (Parnell / Pieterse 2014), urban policy and development (Pieterse et al. 2010; Beall / Fox 2009) or on city planning (Harrison et al. 2013). Similarly, studies on inequality, race and stratification (Crankshaw 2008) and related topics such as the eradication of slums housing urban poor (Huchzermeyer 2011) are of high importance for research and for the public debate on urbanity in contemporary Africa. While being aware of the significance of changing urban environments, policy and development paths, the contributions of this volume focus on different aspects. Instead of examining structural transformations, the authors examine what it means to live in a city and how it is possible to study these experiences. It is necessary to keep in mind that neither numbers on urban development rates nor data on the rising average income of city dwellers can describe the meaningfulness of life in African cities. But what is the relation of "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (Simmel 1971 [1903]) and can we find a special way of "Urbanism as

a way of life" (Wirth 1938) in 21<sup>st</sup> century African settings? If we can answer these questions positively, how can we understand the specific qualities of life in African cities?

To answer these and more questions, the proposed volume aims to examine aspects of living in African cities from an interdisciplinary point of view with a focus on qualitative approaches. By considering the hows and whys in several settings – Nairobi, Khartoum, Addis Ababa and Dar es Salaam – the texts collected here want to give a more precise description by qualitative account and not by quantitative research: The contributions study social groups, actors including practices and influences such as politics that shape contemporary African cities and urban spaces. They also raise methodological questions regarding research on living in African cities. The different approaches to practices, politics, city dwellers and their cities complement each other and open new analytical perspectives to study the dynamics and the fluid processes of living in urban Africa. This reciprocal relationship of cities and their residents in the African context also discloses differentiations in power relations, lifestyles and milieus, which influence mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the everyday life of urban spaces.

The focus of this BIGSASworks! is to tackle the everyday life practices people witness in (emerging) cities in sub-Saharan Africa. The importance of this volume rests on the fact that most disciplines in African studies have regarded African cities/Africans living in cities rather as an exemption than the rule. Even though African cities have been a research subject in social sciences for decades, this field has been neglected compared to studies in rural areas. Nowadays social sciences cannot ignore the tremendous growth in African cities anymore (Macamo 2013: 292) and urgent focus on urban-context research projects are highly needed. At first glance, the dichotomy between city and country appears to be obvious. There seems to be a general acceptance that urban areas are different from rural areas regardless their context (Macamo 2013: 292). But what exactly are the differences? Can it be adequate to talk about population density or different infrastructures to differentiate the urban from the rural? And how is it possible to study the complex but diverse rural urban relations in different African contexts (Geschiere / Gugler 1998; Ferguson 1999). This volume seeks to trace the urban in an African context and asks among other things the question what constitutes the living in an African city. Based on qualitative methods, different research methodologies and topics allow to gain insights into urban life situations and to understand the living in African cities without recourse to generalizing and expected differentiation categories. Here assumptions concerning the urban, and therefore the city, change into open research questions on methodological as well as theoretical level.

Another question that this issue addresses critically is how social science research portrays African cities as places where all aspects of chaos, poverty, inadequate public services, defunct infrastructure, lack of economic improvement opportunities, and environmental hazards exists. Therefore, all the aspects that have been mentioned before require a close examination to understand how people experience the urban conditions in sub-Saharan Africa in their everyday life. Moreover, this volume will focus on the particularity of African Cities, as all of them open up new perspectives on living in urban contexts in a more general sense.

We assume that there is an interrelation between the way in which city dwellers live in a city and how the different groups and actors contribute to the production of the urban space. Likewise, if African cities are considered as the manifestation of modernity, and as places where people hope to achieve a better life (Werthmann 2014: 161), these urban spaces can be seen as scenes of social production and creation of new cultural forms of 'modern' life. The culture of modernity is according to Mbembe and Nuttall (2004: 361) also synonymous with the culture of the metropolis. Consequently, modernity is also a leading concept of this volume of BIGSASworks!. Accordingly, the "mental life" of the modern African city dwellers is not only conditioned by the rhythm of social processes in the city (Simmel 1971 [1903]), but also by the mobility of people, and by the circulation of global goods, ideas, technology and norms that affect the density of the population, the rhythm and the quality of life in the city. The global interconnectedness also sets up the benchmarks and the norms towards which city dwellers orient their meaningful actions in the everyday life in the city.

## **The contributions to this volume**

The following contributions attempt to address emerging issues to understand the everyday practices in urban Africa.

The methodological essay *Studying urban Africa* by Johanna Sarre opens the stage for the empirical contributions by looking back on the trans-disciplinary evolvement of African urban studies. Pointing to commonalities of and cross-fertilizations between historical, anthropological, sociological and developmental studies, she argues for a non-normative study of everyday life in Sub-Saharan cities to counter dichotomous narratives of rural/urban and tradition/modernity. In consequence, the essay also questions the assumption of African cities being ontologically different from other urban realities.

In her article, *Khartoum the Past and Future: urban planning practices at the margin of Africa*, Azza Mustafa Babikir Ahmed disputes from an anthropological perspective the different perceptions of urban planning in Khartoum city (the capital city of the Sudan). She focuses on the analysis of different past and present visions from various actor groups (e.g. inhabitants, planners, institutions) to plan Khartoum. Every group brings in its own motivation to participate in the planning discourse, as well as different resources of power such as knowledge, political affiliation, land ownership and identity claims. She examines different views of how the future of the city is perceived among these groups and how their views interact with each other. Furthermore, this article seeks to answer the question of how such contesting views are shaping the current social situation in the African city.

In the article *Apprentissage et pratiques de citadinité et de translocalité dans les Beauty Salons d'Addis Abeba*, Delia Nicoué also approaches her topic, in this case beauty salons in Addis Ababa, from an anthropological perspective. She conceptualizes beauty salons as specific urban spaces respectively as 'scenes of instruction'. Influenced by the sociology of space developed by Martina Löw, Nicoué focuses on the urban, cosmopolitan and transnational atmospheres that are

produced in the beauty salon. These atmospheres do not only open a window to the world, but also affect the perception of young females, both employees and customers, concerning their imaginations and lifestyle; in the beauty salons, they are 'instructed' to live a city life. For Nicoué the notion to participate in a globally influenced cosmopolitanism in the cities enhances migration.

In *How to be middle class in Nairobi – lifestyles of middle class milieus and their relation to Nairobi's city structure*, Florian Stoll aims to reconstruct specific urban characteristics of Nairobi by examining milieu differentiations and middle-class practices. Theoretically, he refers to Martina Löw's concept of space, that conceptualizes space as (re)production of structure and action, and to the concept of the "intrinsic logic" or "distinctiveness" of cities developed by Löw and Helmut Berking. According to the term "distinctiveness", there are specific local ways of how things are done, how social groups are distinguished here, including how social action is performed. Today, there is a new generation of 'middle class' Nairobians exhibiting different lifestyles with certain socio-cultural elements. Stoll focuses on two milieus and their lifestyles: the Young Nairobi Professionals and the Christian Religious. Following the approach of the 'distinctiveness' of the cities, these milieus reveal in their practices specific urban characteristics of Nairobi and are therefore bound to Nairobi.

Johanna Rieß investigates the sociology of space from a comparative perspective with three cybercafés in Nairobi in her article *Cybercafés in Nairobi – Social differences as urban phenomenon*. The cybercafés are located in three different socio-cultural districts of Nairobi: The Speed Wave Cyber in the City Centre as part of the central business district, the NGA Trick Cyber in Mathare in one of the so-called slum areas and the Easy Surf Internet Shop in Westlands in a middle- and upper-class district. The three cafés are initially described regarding their material and social goods, before being compared on different levels of space constituting aspects including gender, mobility, age and hierarchal structures. The different spaces of the cybercafés, understood from Martina Löw not as materiality but as societal (re)production of structure and actions from a comparative perspective reveals a Nairobi city society that is shaped by the simultaneity of social differences on different levels.

In her article *Tracing the past of an urban group: Manyema in urban Tanzania*, Katharina Zöller looks at the ethnic Manyema group in the three towns of Dar es Salaam, Tabora and Ujiji in Tanzania from a historical perspective. Through an 'ethnic lens', she focuses on the Manyema's particular historical contributions to specific urbanities. The Manyema were among the earliest arrivals to all three towns and can be seen from today's perspective as long-established inhabitants. By adapting to town life in the early days, the achievement of a free status as *Ungwana* and the development of a common shared ethnic identity was central for many Manyema in these towns. During the interwar years, rising cosmopolitanism – understood as an outcome of the difficult process of coping with diversity – led to different levels of confrontation between the Manyema and other town groups. From the 1950s onwards, the Manyema became 'modern townspeople' and were politically involved in the independence struggle.

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# Studying Urban Africa

## A Trans-disciplinary Methodological Essay

Johanna Sarre

### 1 Studying urban Africa – why, what and how?

With numbers of people living in African cities on the rise, urban life on the African continent draws the interest of an increasing number of scholars from social and cultural sciences e.g. anthropology, geography, history and sociology. However, social scientist dealings with urban Africa look back on a somewhat clumsy history and continuously grapple with particular conceptual and methodological questions, some of which are also echoed in this working paper collection. The most central of these questions is, I argue, how to study (in) African cities. The answers to this question depend largely on another question, namely whether or not there is something particular about ‘African’ cities, which would require an adjustment or innovation of methods, and approaches which have proven useful in other contexts or cities.

In the latter question, there reverberates the underlying assumption of cities being an extraordinary phenomenon on the African continent and African urbanities being somewhat different from urban life-forms in other corners of the world. These assumptions hint at larger debates: one which points to supposedly rural nature of the African continent and another which sees (Sub-Saharan) Africa as an arena where issues of tradition/modernity become prominent in a very particular way, often coinciding with the rural/urban dichotomy.<sup>1</sup> As the contributions to this BIGSASworks! show, a closer look at the everyday life worlds of people living in African cities reveals that the image of the ‘rural continent’ Africa cannot be upheld, neither for the past (see Zöllner in this volume) nor at present. It also reveals that dichotomies of rural/urban and traditional/modern cannot be maintained, but should rather be conceptualized as a fluctuating relationship of mutual influence. D. Nicoué’s article (this volume) exemplifies one of the many instances in which the interdependency between rural/urban places and imaginations of tradition/modernity become manifest: In the meaning ascribed to clothing, hairstyle and ‘citadin’-habitus, to beauty salons as a typically *urban* institution in Ethiopia and a place where village girls learn ‘how to be urban/cosmopolitan’. Life worlds in African cities are both linked to rural areas and to translocal movements of people (see Nicoué in this volume), technology (see Rieß in this volume), ideas and images (see Mustafa Babikir Ahmed in this volume) as well as conducts of life

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Freund’s critique of the “rural bias that affects much African studies” (2007: viii) where he also discusses the connection between city and ‘citizenship’: “On the whole, the city was the more likely residence of the citizen and the concept of individual citizenship. [...] Rural studies, peasant studies, have easily represented themselves as the true Africa.” (Freund 2007: viii)

and aspirations (see Stoll in this volume).

When it comes to approaching ‘the African city’, the perspective on individual life worlds and a strong focus on everyday lives of people living (more or less temporarily) in urban environments in Africa unites the contributions in this volume. Methodologically, however, the papers combined here offer a great bandwidth of approaches, which can be seen as symptomatic for the struggle of social sciences to grasp the social realities in African cities, often conceptualized as unruly places, marked by informality, rampant poverty and dysfunctionalities of all kinds.<sup>2</sup> However, “considering Africa’s cities as dysfunctional, chaotic, failed, informal, or not globalized works to retain the Western city as the paradigmatic model against which all others are to be assessed.” (Fourchard 2011: 247) Yet this Eurocentric juxtaposition is of little help to develop a methodological approach to the empirical phenomena. Most disciplines of African studies have struggled in one way or another to find suitable approaches to the urban areas of their object of study. However, as I will highlight below, the methodological developments in the study of urban Africa can also be read as a success story of interdisciplinary cross-fertilization, long before ‘inter-/transdisciplinarity’ was the catchphrase of the day.

In this essay, I therefore want to point out methodological developments in the field of urban African studies and link them back to the contributions assembled in this volume. In conclusion, I hope to derive some insights, if not about the nature of ‘African’ cities as such, at least about the nature of social science dealings with and construction of this particular object of study: The African city, as viewed by scholars of African studies.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 The city in African studies

By now, African studies have fully embraced the urban realities of the African continent. This is exemplified by the focus of the European Association of African Studies 2017 “Urban Africa – Urban Africans” conference, which received 347 panel proposals and over 1500 paper proposals (ECAS 2017a) from various disciplines. The study of African cities can look back on an impressive exchange between the disciplines named in the subtitle and the contributions in this volume point to that history of interdisciplinary exchange: If one was to reify the boundaries of disciplines, almost every researcher who contributed to this volume has been borrowing concepts and methods related to the study of African cities from neighboring disciplines. In the following

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<sup>2</sup> N.B. the strong wording of the supposedly analytic parts of UNHABITAT’s *The state of African cities* report: “As the urbanization of African poverty makes further progress [..., m]ore and more Africans are forced into informality, whether as a sheer survival strategy or because their living environments are defined by unregulated, non-serviced urban settlements and slums.” (2010: ii) “Polarization and confrontation have increased in African cities due to *laissez-faire* attitudes to rapid urbanization. The unfolding pattern is one of disjointed, dysfunctional and unsustainable urban geographies of inequality and human suffering, with oceans of poverty containing islands of wealth.” (2010: 2, Italics in original)

<sup>3</sup> The author wishes to thank the members of the BIGSAS work group ‘City in Africa’ and the editorial team of this BIGSASworks! for fruitful discussions which led to the writing of this essay. The editorial team as well as Sabrina Maurus, Manfred Stoppok and Katharina Zöller deserve gratitude for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this contribution.

paragraphs, I will sketch the various approaches within disciplines of African studies and relate them to the approaches taken in this volume.

## **2.1 African urban history – history of a (supposedly) rural continent**

Global history has for a long time considered Africa to be a rural continent and veritable African cities to be a development of colonialization, hence, modernity. That this perception is highly historical has been proven widely and is exemplified in this volume by D. Nicoué's contribution in Addis Ababa, which was considered "the Paris of Abyssinia" already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Zewde 2005: 121). However, the perception of Africa as a predominantly rural continent and African cities as recent colonial creations made the situation for scholars of African urban history difficult, as K. Zöllner (this volume) points out, citing from a book called "Africa's urban past": "History had little place in towns, because towns had little history." (Anderson / Rathbone 2000: 10) However, since the 1980s, African urban history has developed as a subfield of historical studies (Fourchard 2005). Indeed, a search in library online catalogues for "urban history, Africa" produces a wide range of books and articles that deal with the history of particular African (capital) cities. As such, they are however prone to the critique which Fourchard uttered when calling upon historians "to move beyond the traps of localisms" (2011: 223). While it is worthy to collect and analyze the available information about a city, these works tend to overlook the entanglements and connections between cities and therefore miss the chance "to explore African urban dynamics in relation to world history and the history of the state in order to contribute to larger debates between social scientists and urban theorists." (Fourchard 2011: 223)

K. Zöllner's contribution in this volume does not only succeed to point to the interconnections between cities (with the Manyema moving between and being at home in several cities). She also widens the all-too-common focus on large/capital cities to construct her field of study along the connections of the Manyema, which weave together the towns and cities of Ujiji (Kigoma), Iringa, Tabora and, lastly Dar es Salaam in present-day Tanzania. Her contribution is yet another proof that the colonial perception of a predominantly rural continent has to be dismissed: Her study of the Manyema demonstrates impressively that there have been African urbanites long before social science attention turned to those urban elites, politically active parts of a cosmopolitan urban community.

Much of the social science study of rapidly urbanizing Africa and the celebration of seemingly 'new' phenomena such as African urbanites are highly questionable. They reiterate teleologies of linear development which historical studies can serve to deconstruct, as Fourchard argues: "Historians can participate in those debates in ways that demonstrate that history matters, but not in a linear way." (Fourchard 2011: 223) To bring oral histories to the fore, to juxtapose colonial documents with other versions of (oral) history can add to criticize the historical view on African urbanities. Methodologically, this means going beyond the usual archival research in colonial archives, and grasping oral sources like Zöllner (this volume) has done in her PhD research, on which her contribution builds. These oral sources do not only contain individual accounts and

family histories, but give access to “local histories shared, transmitted and discussed within a towns’ Manyema community or one of its subgroups.” (see Zöller in this volume)

## 2.2 Anthropologists – the agoraphobic lot?

Times are gone when anthropologists could be described as a “notoriously agoraphobic lot, anti-urban by definition”, as Hannerz (1980: 1, citing Benet 1963: 212) called them tongue-in-cheek in the introduction to his seminal book “Exploring the city”. Since Hannerz asked in the early 1980s, whether anthropologists should (and could) research *the* city or do research *in* the city, the body of literature in urban anthropology has grown extensively. Out of the 223 panels of the ECAS conference “Urban Africa – Urban Africans: New encounters of the rural and the urban”, about a quarter (58) were categorized ‘anthropological’. (ECAS 2017b) Yet, as Werthmann asked in a recent publication, the question remains whether and in which ways the African city is “knowable” at all (Werthmann 2014: 159), except for her inhabitants.

The rural-urban migration of anthropology, however, has brought certain methodological problems to the fore, which researchers grapple with up to present. Ferguson states that “urban field-workers, of course, have often lamented the lack of a knowable social whole that fieldwork in rural communities often provides” (1999: 18). In his view, urban ethnography means both “doing fieldwork without the comfort of a bounded local community [and] working in the midst of rapid social transformations” (1999: 20). Simone, whom Werthmann (2014: 161) calls one of the most popular ‘urbanists’ of the present, also points to these rapid transformations, stating that researching (in) African cities, “it is difficult to be confident that one is working with stable and consistent entities over time.” (2004: 15) Simone solves this problem, as many others have done before and since, by focusing exactly on the fleeting, that which is ‘in progress’ in urban (social) environments in Africa.

The contributions to this volume, whether deemed anthropological or not, follow this line: The focus is on entities which are subject to change or which mirror social transformations and mobility. K. Zöller focuses on a group of migrants which became known under an ‘ethnic’ umbrella term. Identification with this label, however, changed over time and from town to town. F. Stoll’s ‘milieus’ can rather be considered groups of people adhering to certain similar lifestyles, but they are not such tightly woven, face-to-face communities a classical village-anthropologist would have encountered. The cybercafés, which J. Rieß has researched, are analyzed as spatial entities, but seen as societal structures they open up a broader view on the Nairobi city society and its social differences. The women in Addis Ababa’s beauty salons, which D. Nicoué has studied, can also not be regarded as belonging to a bounded entity. Addis beauty salons are but one station on their various trajectories of mobility and migration. As such, the studies of particular urban realities may seem localized, but they always link up to larger issues and debates in social sciences.

Methodologically, most contributors of this volume build upon the foundations of qualitative, ethnographic fieldwork. The attention to the everyday and a focus on the city dwellers own emic

perspectives are present in all the accounts, albeit to a varying degree. Access to these experiences is mostly achieved and best possible through participant observation (regarded as the central method of ethnography). As such, the contributors to this volume follow the line of the famous proponents of urban research in Africa, among which one must not fail to mention the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (RLI). Werthmann names Monika Hunter and Ellen Hellmann, both South African anthropologists, as ‘pioneers’ of anthropological research into urban Africa (2014: 162). In 1932, Monica Hunter studied the life of Pondo people living in so called ‘locations’ (Hunter 1936). In 1933/34, Hellmann undertook a thorough study of Rooiyard, an “urban native slum yard” (Hellmann 1946) in Johannesburg. In 1935, Hunter married Godfrey Wilson, who had studied under Malinowski<sup>4</sup> and was appointed as the first director of the RLI in 1938 (Werthmann 2014: 162). Wilson’s career, “pioneering urban anthropological research” (Hansen 2015: 193), was hindered by his pacifist opposition to the war and cut short by his death during WWII.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, when Hellmann’s research was published by the Rhodes-Livingstone-Institute, it was entitled “A *sociological* study of an urban native slum yard” (my emphasis), which points to the many synergies and methodological cross-fertilizations which the different disciplines in African studies have undergone while studying African urban realities.

### 2.3 Sociology: ethnography and *Eigenlogik* of African cities

Sociology is classically known for an early move to the study of urban (sub)cultures, with Whyte’s “Street corner society” (1981 [1943]) as a ground-breaking oeuvre. The fact that “Street corner society” is regarded ethnographical and earned W.F. Whyte the reputation as a forerunner of participant observation is, in turn, proof of the synergetic effects between anthropology and sociology in the history of urban studies. However, while British anthropologists applied ethnographic methods to South African cities, sociology of the time was characterized by a focus on cities in the global North.

When talking about the method of urban ethnography, one must not fail to mention the Chicago School, pioneers in urban sociology who employed ethnographic methods to study ‘subcultures’ in Chicago and whose ground-breaking influence on social sciences “extends far beyond the discipline of sociology.” (Jaynes 2009: 375) A thorough immersion into the field of study and a focus on emic (insider) perspectives is visible in all the contributions to this volume. The diverse methods employed to grasp, understand and analyze the realities found in African cities are by no means a monopoly of one discipline or the other. All contributors of this volume have been in the very location they write about (which is a common place for qualitative studies, but a ‘unique selling feature’ in comparison to quantitative, macro-analyses of African cities, on which the hype about African urbanization is based), they have conducted interviews (giving people the chance

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<sup>4</sup> Bronisław Malinowski is considered one of the founding fathers of modern anthropology, a leading example of the use of ethnographic fieldwork methods, especially participant observation.

<sup>5</sup> For a preview of the potential which lies in the retrospective analysis of Monica and Godfrey Wilson’s original material (catalogued and made accessible to the public at the University of Cape Town, South Africa in the late 1990s), see Hansen (2015).

to bring forward their own ideas and structures of thought by favoring open forms of inquiry over closed, researcher-centered), lived in and walked the cities with their inhabitants.

The city as a structure which is both a prerequisite and an outcome of social interactions is particularly prominent in those three contributions in this volume (see Rieß, Stoll, Nicoué) in which the authors have used an approach influenced by “Raumsoziologie” or sociology of space, namely that of M. Löw. Also, the sociological concept of ‘Eigenlogik’ (intrinsic logic) of cities is a common denominator for these sociological contributions (namely see Stoll in this volume, to a lesser extent see Rieß in this volume) and links them back to debates in sociology than extend beyond the borders of the African continent.

J. Rieß’ comparison of cybercafés is perhaps the one with the strongest focus on space(s) as a methodological approach. A. Mustafa Babikir Ahmed’s research is grounded on the idea of topographical space, but focuses on the social interactions and political discourses attached to Tuti Island, a contested space in Khartoum, Sudan. D. Nicoué and J. Rieß both use Löw’s concept of ‘atmosphere’, a qualitative characteristic of urban space, which arises “through the perception of interactions between people and/or from the external effect of social goods in their arrangement.” (Löw 2008: 44). The methodological strength of the contributions assembled in this working paper edition lies in capturing exactly that: the atmospherically, qualitative characteristics of urban everyday life in African cities.

#### **2.4 Development studies & urban planning: “expectations of modernity” at work**

Urban planning and mapping for the sake of policy making and development are an area of scholarly activity related to African cities which should not be neglected, albeit no contribution in this volume explicitly takes on the perspective of urban planning or development studies. For scholars of development studies and urban planning, African cities present a conundrum of ‘challenges’, or – less euphemistic – seemingly insurmountable problems. These are presented against a background of powerful teleology of development, “expectations of modernity” (Ferguson 1999) connected to ‘city life’, measuring African cities against cities in the traditional industrialized countries. A statement from a contribution on urbanization in Africa to the book “Urban planning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” shall serve to illustrate this stance: The author claims that the

“enormous difficulties posed by the vicious circles in which African countries are often caught in addition to the failure of governments to design effective urban policies have largely prevented cities from benefitting from the processes of urbanization and economic growth brought by globalization.” (Osumanu 2009: 129)

The contributions to this volume paint a more diverse, and in some cases, radically different picture of African cities, without denying the difficulties, forms of exclusion and practical challenges which the inhabitants of African cities face. The contributors have documented Africans living in African cities who profit differently from the possibilities to access the Internet

(see Rieß in this volume), enjoy and perform various aspects of ‘modern’ lifestyles (see Stoll in this volume) and indulge in the possibilities of a global, modern, consumer culture nurtured in the beauty salons of Addis Ababa, which are “windows to the world” at large (see Nicoué in this volume). A. Mustafa Babikir Ahmed’s article (this volume) most explicitly criticizes and deconstructs such highly normative “urban master plan”-perspectives. Her analysis of the Tuti Island case points to the discursive nature of such modernist claims and reveals the influence of politics and the aspects of power involved in (development) planning processes.

This apprehension reminds us again, as Fourchard writes, “to contest interpretations of Africa’s cities that construe them as ontologically different from other cities of the world” (2011: 223) and deconstruct discourses around (dys)functionality, modernization and urban development with the same attentive caution as in other urban areas around the globe.

### **3 Concluding remarks**

African cities might each have a logic of their own, yet they share common traits according to their shared history of colonialism and developmental urban planning. However, they are not ontologically different from cities in other parts of the world. To acknowledge this might enable us to a) look in a less normative way at African city realities as what they are, rather than what they are not (in comparison to Western cities, urban master plans or ‘expectations of modernity’) and “how they arrived at their contemporary configurations” and b) link African urban studies back to larger academic debates which transcend the borders of the African continent (Fourchard 2011: 224).

One successful way to understand African urban realities beyond normative lenses is to look at the everyday interactions that constitute African cities as social realms. This focus on the detailed, empirically grounded qualitative apprehension of African city dwellers’ emic perspectives is the common strength of the contributions in this volume.

Transdisciplinary inspiration in terms of methods helps to avoid inventing the wheel repeatedly. It has been an opportunity for African urban studies to make use of the methods and approaches furthered in various social science disciplines who have dealt with, and are still dealing with, African cities and people living in these cities. This volume is a move in exactly this direction as it is based on conversations over the course of 18 months between young scholars of various disciplines who are interested in understanding the social realities in/of African cities.

Questions remain, which scholars researching (in) cities on the African continent have to pose themselves: What makes an African city? What is ‘African’ about a city (be it on the African continent or, say, in another corner of the world)? What do we learn about a city by studying a certain phenomenon in a city? What do we learn about cities by studying a particular one? To what extent are the objects of our study particularly ‘urban’ and how can we grasp this urban character? How are our studies reifying a perceived gap between the ‘rural’ and the ‘urban’ and related

assumptions of tradition and modernity? To answer these questions clearly goes beyond the possibilities of the empirical papers assembled in this BIGSASworks!. A strong link to the empirical realities on the African continent, however, could be the basis for the answer to some of these questions.

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# Tracing the Past of an Urban Group:

## Manyema in Urban Tanzania<sup>1</sup>

Katharina Zöller

### 1 Introduction

In J. A. K. Leslie's (1963: 49) sociological household survey of Dar es Salaam, the Manyema were described as the "citizens of Dar es Salaam par excellence". This seems astonishing, as the rather vague umbrella term 'Manyema'<sup>2</sup> usually comprises people from a vast forest region in eastern Congo who migrated towards the Indian Ocean Coast from the mid-19th century until the early 20th century, often in connection with the caravan trade as slaves, porters, soldiers or refugees. What made this heterogeneous mix of people from eastern Congo become the epitome for inhabitants of the capital of the British Mandate Tanganyika Territory?

Leslie's statement invites to trace a story of seemingly successful integration of migrants from what is today eastern Congo into Tanzanian towns. Indeed, glimpses on prominent involvement of individual Manyema in urban social life and politics in the secondary literature (for example Brennan 2012; Iliffe 1979 or Said 1998) first raised my interest in these people who were, as is visible from colonial census data and supported by most interview partners, living overwhelmingly in urban centers along the old central route of caravan trade. While I focus on "Manyema connections" in my current doctoral research<sup>3</sup>, this paper invites to rather think from a 'cities'- than a 'groups'-perspective. Leslie's description also raises questions about European as well as African understandings of urbanity and the 'typical' African urbanite, and hence, what urban life looked like and how it changed in the course of history. What were the prevalent and perhaps diverging normative concepts of urbanity and actual social practices related to them in

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<sup>1</sup> I thank my colleague Geert Castryck, who is currently working on the history of Kigoma-Ujiji, for his thorough reading of an earlier version of this paper and highly appreciated his comments and advice.

<sup>2</sup> The designation 'Manyema' was first used by Arab travelers and missionaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to denote people from the Umanyema region. It emerged as a self-designation only after people had left their homes in Umanyema and had settled at the eastern side of Lake Tanganyika. The designation is not current in eastern Congo. Which ethnic group is included in this term varies from locality to locality (e.g. in distance to the home region), perspective (emic or etic), and also over time. This demonstrates the fluidity of Manyema identification processes, see for example McCurdy 2000 and my ongoing research.

<sup>3</sup> This paper is based on material I collected for my PhD thesis on "*The Manyema connection: Islam, mobility and urbanity in Tanganyika and eastern Congo, 1910s to 1950s*". My research stays in Tanzania (October to November 2011) and again in Tanzania and Congo (July to November 2012) as well as several archival stays in London, Oxford and Brussels were funded by BIGSAS, University of Bayreuth.

the 1950s and before? How did the Manyema become an urban group that 'fitted' in Tanganyikan towns and what was their relation to other inhabitants? Did they shape town life in specific ways over time? And on a conceptual level, what can we possibly learn about a town by tracing the history of a migrant's group in this town?

In Tanzania's buzzing and ever-expanding port city Dar es Salaam, Manyema were among the first permanent settlers and constituted a considerable portion of the population before World War I. In the 1931 census, around 4.5% of Dar es Salaam's inhabitants indicated 'Manyema' as their 'kabila', their 'tribe', still constituting one of the biggest of Dar es Salaam's more than 150 immigrant groups (Brennan / Burton 2007a: 34-35). Today they are a very tiny and widely distributed minority among the city's more than four million inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> How then to locate Manyema interview partners, who can tell me something about their own past and wider (and older) Manyema history in town? During my first field stay in Dar es Salaam in 2011, I addressed myself to the Manyema mosque in Kariakoo, where Manyema committee members and teachers shared their interesting life histories with me.<sup>5</sup> I was surprised to learn that not one of them was born in the capital. They came mostly from Ujiji, the once flourishing trading town on Lake Tanganyika, which feels now rather like a quiet suburb of neighboring Kigoma, or even from Iringa, a small town far off the central caravan route and had partly lived in Tabora. Hence, they provided me with further contacts in these towns explaining that the 'original Manyema of Dar es Salaam' were rare to find today. By 'original Manyema', they meant the first generation of migrants and their offspring in contrast to the large number of Manyema who had come to Dar es Salaam in the course of their lives from smaller Tanzanian towns.<sup>6</sup>

Inspired by reflections on this episode, the following points will serve as a guideline to this chapter, combining conceptual and methodological discussions with selected empirical examples of Manyema urban history. First, there is the challenge to see a town's history through an ethnic lens, both in terms of grasping the fluid and historically changing 'object of research', i.e. Manyema, in written and oral sources on towns and in terms of the contribution of this perspective to a specific town's history. Secondly, based on a reflection on the growth and decline of 'towns' and the problematic of clear definitions, the three most important towns for Manyema in Tanganyika, namely Dar es Salaam, Tabora and Ujiji, will be introduced. In a further step, I will present visions of urbanity and corresponding examples of Manyema urban histories at different historical stages, bearing in mind that colonial reports usually reveal more about European efforts of (and African answers to) planning and administering of cities than notions of urbanity. In the Manyema case, I argue, to be urban means to be at home in several towns. Hence, the scope of urban history research should be widened, not only to a town's hinterland but, as this case requires, to other connected towns.

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<sup>4</sup> The 2012 Census for Dar es Salaam Region counts 4,364,541 inhabitants.

<sup>5</sup> See interviews 7, 9 and 10, 9 November 2012, Dar es Salaam and interview 18, 5 October 2012.

<sup>6</sup> This was explained by low birth rates of Manyema women and frequent intermarriage with local Zaramo.

## 2 Urban history and the 'ethnic lens'

"History had little place in towns, because towns had little history." (Anderson / Rathbone 2000b: 10) This widely held notion in African studies may explain why historians of Africa entered the scene of urban studies rather late in comparison to social scientists and to their colleagues working on North American and European towns. The first studies on African towns in the 1970s followed the paradigm of new social history and framed the African town primarily as sites of colonial oppression and resistance. Today African urban history has widened in scope and includes for example the fields of spatial orders, planning and management, sport and popular culture or rural-urban relations. First comparative approaches led to the problematizing of typologies of African towns and to a periodization of urbanization processes. But still, historical research on African cities and their inhabitants remains overwhelmingly "eclectic and ecumenical", as James Brennan and Andrew Burton (2007a: 2) point out in their historiography on Dar es Salaam.<sup>7</sup> Historians such as Anderson and Rathbone (2000a) or Lonsdale (2002) share the concern with scholars from other disciplines that the city is treated as a 'container' for analyzing all sorts of societal phenomena taking place there rather than being the actual subject of the study.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the study of migrants in urban contexts, Nina Glick Schiller and Ayse Çağlar (2009: 177f) state that "cities enter international migration scholarship as containers that provide spaces in which migrants settle and work. It is a migrant population variously called an ethnic group or minority community that is the subject of study and analysis." Their call to analyze the "interplay between migration and urban transformation" (2009: 178) for research on neoliberal rescaling of cities is also perfectly true for studies of historical spatial as well as social transformations of urban life. Thus, while I am still utilizing an 'ethnic lens', the focus of this chapter is not on the history of Manyema as transnational Diaspora community, but on their historical contributions to specific urbanities. The interest in historical case studies on migrants or strangers in African urban societies rose due to recent conflicts in various African cities between so-called 'autochthones' and 'newcomers'.<sup>9</sup> Studying these often constructed and shifting lines which divide a town's population can be one way to learn more about a city's character, for example through a critical understanding of cosmopolitanism as proposed by Simpson and Kresse (2008).

Finding relevant written sources on members of a group based on ethnic identification seems more difficult in a multi-ethnic urban setting as compared to (supposedly) homogeneous rural settings. In Tanganyikan towns, colonial bureaucrats, missionaries or travelers tended to lump Africans together into one group in contrast to 'Arabs', 'Indians' and 'Europeans'. Manyema were officially recognized as a 'tribe' in the eyes of colonial bureaucrats in the course of the 20th century, exemplified by the existence of (often internally disputed) Manyema representatives in

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<sup>7</sup> For an overview over changing research trends and important contributions to African urban history see for example Anderson / Rathbone 2000a.

<sup>8</sup> For an early anthropological discussion of the problem see e.g. Hannerz 1980.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Shack / Skinner 1979 or for recent work Fourchard 2009, and with less historical depth but interesting conceptual discussions Whitehouse 2012 and Geschiere 2009.

the various towns (Zöllner June 2013).<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, they slipped through the ethnographic grid. Similarly to the Nubi<sup>11</sup>, Manyema undermined colonial visions of a colony ordered by neatly circumscribed rural 'tribal homelands' interspersed with towns in which African migrants were supposed to live only temporarily or otherwise were feared to become 'detrribalized'. Therefore, neither explorers, missionaries nor colonial officials did produce any major 'Manyema tribal study', and enquiries on intercolonial levels reveal that not much was known about them (Zöllner June 2013). Reading through material on townships and municipalities, one finds few single entries specifically on Manyema (also spelled Nyema, Njema, Manouema...) and far more information under a multitude of labels. These range from designations of ethnic subgroups, competing factions, professional groups, well-known family names to broader labels like 'Swahili', Muslims, 'Waungwana' (free men) and 'Watumwa' (slaves), 'Congolese', 'Watu wa kuja' (immigrants) and so forth. All in all, trying to use an ethnic lens in a historical research context, where people are often described as 'detrribalized' or 'swahilized' implies a lot of puzzling together from very different files. Challenging as this may be for practical archival research and data interpretation, these different labels under which Manyema can be found are highly interesting: They indicate the various groups Manyema (were) associated with, which, as I will discuss later on, may reveal their understandings of urbanity.

Generally, colonial officials had varying degrees of sensibility towards and knowledge of the African inhabitants in the towns they were responsible for. Moreover, the availability and quality of archival data, colonial literature and social, ethnographical or historical studies for the former capital Dar es Salaam, the regional (and diocesan) center Tabora and the district town Kigoma-Ujiji on the national border to Congo and Burundi differ considerably.<sup>12</sup> As John Lonsdale (2002: 210) reminds us, official concern played a major role in reporting urban events and people: Officials were "more aware, for instance, of prostitutes than of wives, of migrant wage-workers than of the self-employed, artisans and entrepreneurs", which might give researchers a wrong picture of urban daily life. Thus, in order to get a feeling of how to read the sources and to detect and fill probable gaps, interviews proved most helpful. Unlike more recent refugees from war areas in neighboring countries (Sommers 2001), most of my interviewees did not want to hide their eastern Congolese roots. They were mostly third generation migrants and in possession of a Tanzanian passport. Proud and sometimes puzzled by the interest a young German historian took in their history, most interlocutors willingly shared their knowledge, experience and opinion, showed me around the town and partly invited younger family members to join and learn with me. The approximately 50 interviews I conducted in different towns are certainly not representative of Tanzania's Manyema population. The selection of interview partners was rather arbitrary too, it ranged from taking the mosque as entry point, to recommendations by fellow

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<sup>10</sup> In the case of the Manyema, this was further complicated by the fact that also among groups from eastern Congo living in Tanzania, there was and still is no consensus on who is a "proper Manyema", "Manyema hasa".

<sup>11</sup> Nubi soldiers and their families who were also called 'Sudanese' due to their diverse ethnic origins in the area of present-day Sudan and Uganda, together with Manyema, were seen as first permanent African settlers of Dar es Salaam, see Leslie 1963: 47-48.

<sup>12</sup> See Gordon 2014 for a convincing and empirically founded call to pay more attention to a critical interpretation of the differently produced written sources in colonial contexts.

researchers, personal family and professional contacts of my research assistants and interviewees, and finally, people I met casually. When I asked for persons who could tell me something about Manyema or the town's history, I was most often referred to elderly Muslim men that accordingly provided the bulk of the information I gathered.<sup>13</sup> But still, the oral sources, shaped by individual and collective memory as well as the research context, complement, expand and sometimes contradict written evidence.<sup>14</sup> They can be separated into individual accounts of own experiences for the later colonial and postcolonial period, family histories especially on the coming to Tanzania and lastly, local histories shared, transmitted and discussed within a town's Manyema community or one of its subgroups. Preoccupied with my ethnic lens and the focus on connections and conflicts within the group, I unfortunately conducted only few interviews with non-Manyema, i.e. the other inhabitants of town, with whom Manyema interacted on a daily basis.

### 3 'Towns' along the central caravan route

My archival research was centered in Tanzania's primate city and regional hub Dar es Salaam and in the former colonial metropolis of the region concerned, namely Berlin, London and Brussels. Field research also took me to smaller towns with Manyema communities like Bagamoyo, Iringa, Tanga, and Zanzibar. More important in numbers of their Manyema population were the towns of Tabora in the western woodlands and Kigoma-Ujiji in the far western borderland, which today both number around 220.000 inhabitants.<sup>15</sup> A look back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the first Manyema arrived on the eastern shores of Lake Tanganyika, provides a completely different picture of the urban landscape in eastern Africa and raises questions of when and in whose eyes an agglomeration becomes a town, dense and numerous enough for the evolvement of a specific urban character. According to dictionary entries in the 1880s, the Swahili term 'mji', today usually understood as town in contrast to village (kijiji) or big city (jiji), referred to "a village, town, the central place of a tribe" (Krapf 1882: 230) or, 20 years later, to a "village, hamlet, town, city, i.e. a collection of human dwellings irrespective of number, 5 or 5,000" (Madan 1903: 229). Population figures, it seems, were less relevant in this historical and regional context for a human agglomeration to be called a 'town', as 'mji' encompassed all sorts of agglomerations.

The famous Swahili towns along the Indian Ocean coast like Kilwa or Mombasa have a centuries-old history, but the three towns under consideration in this chapter are comparably young. Dar es Salaam had only been founded in the 1860s by Sultan Majid, Zanzibar's Omani ruler, as his outpost on the African mainland. The first European visitors hardly considered Dar es Salaam a proper town and lamented its visible decline after the Sultan's death. Nevertheless, Dar es Salaam's economic power and its population grew steadily, from 3.000 inhabitants in 1887 to 20.000

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<sup>13</sup> This is a rather common methodological problem, see Lonsdale 2002. Historical work on women in spheres like healing cults or dance networks and politics allow to deduce gendered urban histories, see e.g. McCurdy 1996 or Geiger 1998.

<sup>14</sup> For a methodological discussion related to slavery see Deutsch 2011.

<sup>15</sup> According to the 2012 Census, Kigoma-Ujiji Municipal Council numbered 215,458 inhabitants and Tabora Municipal Council 226,999.

inhabitants around 1900.<sup>16</sup>

The history of Tabora, located in the heart of Unyamwezi in Western Tanzania, predates Dar es Salaam and is connected to Arab and Swahili presence in the region from the 1830s onwards. It developed gradually from rather loose agglomerations and Arab *tembe* (homesteads) around a market place into a colonial town at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>17</sup> Despite its considerable size in pre-colonial times, Tabora's urban character was controversially discussed (Oliver 1998). An African population of around 15.000 drawn from all over the Great Lakes region, who had come in the orbit of the Arab-Swahili traders, the numerous caravans leaving Tabora towards the coast, to Mwanza and Ujiji and the widespread use of the *lingua franca* Swahili were employed by Oliver (1998) as criteria to see Tabora as a vital pre-colonial town. Becher (1997), on the other hand, describes Tabora as 'rural' agglomeration of several villages and states that the colonial military and administrative seat became only 'properly urban' after the arrival of the railway in 1907 – a discussion which again demonstrates the difficulties of defining cities in historical African contexts.<sup>18</sup>

Ujiji, the oldest and – in pre-colonial times – the most important of the three towns, predates the colonial port-town and later train station Kigoma, to which it now formally belongs. The Jiji market place profited from the lake, fertile grounds and nearby salt mines. It experienced a rapid urbanization process in the 19th century when the long distance trade connected with the old regional network. This was visible in the influx of African migrants from the western and northern shores of Lake Tanganyika and from the Manyema region, as well as of Arab, Swahili and Nyamwezi traders from the east, later joined by European explorers, missionaries and colonial officials as well as Indian merchants (Brown 1973; Hino 1971; McCurdy 2000). In 1883, the town was eventually referred to as "metropolis" (Hore / Wolf 1971: 66, 126) of the Lake region.<sup>19</sup> This nicely illustrates the historical switch in size and importance with Dar es Salaam, labelled the "emerging metropolis" (Brennan / Burton 2007b: 13) of the mid20<sup>th</sup> century.

The three towns under consideration here have a very different outlook, regional importance and academic coverage. Analyzing the changing life in these towns from a migrant's perspective, I do see some important connecting points. All towns were strategically located on the caravan routes connecting the Great Lakes region with the Indian Ocean coast. None of them had a long established local urban elite before migrants came into the towns. The towns rather evolved with the arrival of Omani and Hadrami Arabs, Swahili, South Asian and African entrepreneurs, porters and dependents (Sheriff 1987). Despite this strong connection with actors of the long-distance trade, the three towns did certainly not develop in a political vacuum: there was a well-established

<sup>16</sup> See Brennan / Burton 2007b for a comprehensive introduction into Dar es Salaam's history.

<sup>17</sup> For the history of Tabora see Becher 1997 and Pallaver 2011. To my knowledge there is so far no English monograph dedicated to the history of Tabora town, but it is partly covered in related historical works e.g. Rockel 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Lonsdale 2002 provides an interesting similar discussion on the Kenyan context.

<sup>19</sup> Other visitors, however, were disappointed by Ujiji's outlook, as houses were separated by green spaces and there was no orderly street grid, see Brown 1973. In 1931 Ujiji was referred to as a village in the district officers' report, see Tanganyika Territory. District Officer's Reports. Kigoma District 1927-1930. Annual Report 1931 - Kigoma District. Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam (TNA), 8.

surrounding political authority of Zaramo and Shomvi (Dar es Salaam), Nyamwezi (Tabora) or Jiji (Kigoma-Ujiji). However, this authority had not crystallized in the towns as centers of power. In the words of a British Colonial official in 1921, Ujiji “is, I should say, no more a tribal creation than Dar es Salaam is a creation of the Wazaramo.”<sup>20</sup> This left space for new arrivals and their political representatives, like the Sultan’s *liwali* (governor/headman), and resulted in Arab and Swahili alliances with local authority in all three towns. The grades of power distribution differed with Dar es Salaam, where local chiefs had to pay tribute to the sultan, far-off Ujiji where Mwinyi Kheri managed to balance Jiji overlordship<sup>21</sup> and Tabora where in the 1870s a war between Mirambo and the Arab merchants broke out. All towns grew in vicinity of existing local villages and markets, which were incorporated at a later stage with the physical expansion of the towns. Beginning with the German colonial occupation, first of Dar es Salaam, and then also of Tabora and Ujiji-Kigoma<sup>22</sup> the towns gradually received a marked colonial layer, with administrative and military buildings, train stations and/or port extensions. They attracted European settlers, traders and missionaries, Indian merchants and, in bigger numbers, Africans. The urban growth rate accelerated especially in Dar es Salaam, which had overtaken Tabora and Ujiji in size and economic importance since the First World War. Beginning with the interwar years, more and more mission educated Christians moved into these towns, which had been overwhelmingly Muslim up to then. Their growing influence, I argue, together with shifting colonial visions of town life gradually began to change understandings and dominant ways of urban living.

#### 4 Urbanity and Manyema town life

Manyema were described as early arrivals in all three towns and are at least from today’s perspective clearly among the long-established inhabitants. Various waves of arrival in Ujiji and, after the establishment of colonial rule, routes across borders and into different quarters of Kigoma-Ujiji can be deduced from early travel descriptions, archival records and local histories. Sources for pre-colonial and early colonial Manyema migration into Tabora and Dar es Salaam are rare apart from few individual family histories. This may be partly due to colonial difficulties of controlling (and reporting) the movement of individuals within a colony, who decided to leave a place to join relatives or search for work opportunities in other towns. Furthermore, the lack of precise information in official sources and certain gaps in family histories might be related to the sensitive issue of slavery (Zöller December 2014). While there were few plantations around Ujiji, plantations around Dar es Salaam as well as Tabora relied heavily on slave labor well into the German colonial period. Working on plantations ranked lowest within the broad range of slavery further comprising concubines or servants in the households as well as porters, guards and artisans connected with their master’s commercial activities. The growing towns with their new working opportunities provided probably the best option for runaway and manumitted slaves who were unable or unwilling to return to their homes (Deutsch 2006). However, the actual

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<sup>20</sup> Secretary of Native Affairs to His Excellency, Dar es Salaam, 6 May 1928, TNA SF12218, 1.

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed analysis, see Castryck 2016.

<sup>22</sup> In Ujiji, first treaties were signed in 1893, but a military station was erected only in 1896, see Brown 1973.

presence of high numbers of Manyema in Tabora and all along the caravan route up to coastal towns are mentioned in early archival and missionary records as well as in interviews. Early Manyema neighborhoods were for example in Ujiji 'Kwa Wahuni' (the rebels place)<sup>23</sup>, in Tabora around the market or in Chemchem and in Dar es Salaam in Magogoni, Mchafukoge and, after the First World War, in Kariakoo.<sup>24</sup>

Historically shifting spatial configurations of urbanity from a Manyema perspective are not in the focus of this paper.<sup>25</sup> I rather want to discuss specific social configurations of urbanity, namely that a group of migrants connected to slavery constituted a big portion of the early population of three connected towns and ask, in how far this may have shaped town life. In research on African cities, the label 'urbanity' often pops up in connection with urban lifestyles, occupations or popular culture. There is a general weakness in theoretical groundings and analytical frameworks accompanying anthropological studies on African urbanity as compared to rural settings, or in the context of historical research, to the process of urbanization (Anderson / Rathbone 2000b; Förster 2013). In German dictionaries and textbooks, for example, two dimension of urbanity figure prominently, the special manners of townspeople and a special urban atmosphere, defined by density, heterogeneity and openness as visible in architecture or life styles (Gaebe 2004: 19f).<sup>26</sup> Till Förster (2013: 8) suggests an empirical approach "that addresses urbanity as what it is: the production of a social and cultural space by intentional actors". To analyze this process in a historical perspective, John Lonsdale (2002) focuses on successive 'big men' in various Kenyan towns. In his views, the social struggle about the meaning and practice of town life was

"governed by the changing capacity of Africans to win some control over the necessities of urban existence, particularly property and what we must more loosely call 'power'" (Lonsdale 2002: 215).

Townspeople of high standing might embody the prevailing normative concepts of urbanity and show, in which ways Manyema aimed at becoming part of town. In the following, I will discuss changing notions of urbanity, taking three decisive periods, the end of the 19th century, the 1930s and the 1950s as entry points into Manyema urban histories.

#### 4.1 'Urban ways' towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Along the 19<sup>th</sup> century Swahili coast and its hinterland, *uungwana* (nobility, civility) describes an important social and cultural concept that was closely connected to the Swahili city states and

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<sup>23</sup> This refers to revolting Manyema soldiers of the Force Publique in King Leopold's Congo, who fled together with their families to German East Africa numbering several thousand around the turn of the century. See Gov. Général Wahis, Passage éventuel des révoltés en territoire allemand, 1896, Comm. Eloy to Gov. Général Wahis, 9 August 1900 and various other letters in Archives Africaines, Brussels (AA) AE 246/238.

<sup>24</sup> See for example the interviews 34, 27 October 2012, Tabora; 38, 31 October 2012, Tabora and 18, 5 October 2012, Mwanaga.

<sup>25</sup> For relocation of Manyema settlements in colonial Dar es Salaam see Zöllner 2018; for Muslim place-making in Dar es Salaam see Zöllner 2012.

<sup>26</sup> See further the Duden.

their elites (Brennan 2012; Glassman 1995; Kresse 2007; Mathews 2013). *Uungwana*, one reads in a dictionary from 1903, is the

“condition (status, rank, quality) of a freeman (mungwana), commonly contrasted with that of a slave (utumwa), but also denoting a relatively high social grade, - and so, good breeding, education, accomplishments, civilization, in contrast with ushenzi, barbarism.” (Madan 1903: 405)

The terms have Arabic roots, which hint to Swahili integration into the wider Muslim Indian Ocean world (Loimeier / Seesemann 2006). The second part of the quote, however, brings one the Latin *urbanitas* to mind with its strong demarcation from ‘barbarian’, i.e. rural or small town, life styles. Pre-colonial Swahili society was generally known to be inclusive e.g. through Arab and Swahili marriage of African (and indeed Manyema) women. Slaves and other dependents actively sought to alter relations with their masters, for example through controlling parts of their professional activities and thus gaining income to establish families, and lines between free and enslaved were partly blurred (Glassman 1991). However, mounting pressure by Zanzibar’s Omani rulers on the old Swahili urban elites from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century on, the establishment of an extensive plantation slavery and the strong dichotomies and social hierarchies between coastal *waungwana* and inland *washenzi* made it increasingly difficult for people from the mainland to claim Swahili citizenship, as Jonathon Glassman (1995) demonstrates for the towns of Pangani and Bagamoyo.

Thus, in order to take part in town life, Manyema had to acculturate to urban Swahili culture, in other words to become *waungwana*. This meant to learn and profess Swahili in addition to the languages spoken in their areas of origin, to adopt Islam as religion and to wear coastal dress. This was certainly easier for the second generation of migrants, who were already born on the coast or in the inland Swahili towns Tabora and Ujiji.<sup>27</sup> Some informants claim that their families had already been ‘civilized’ when they came to what is today Tanzania, for example through early contact with Arabs and Swahili in the trading towns of Kasongo and Nyangwe in the Manyema forest region.<sup>28</sup> According to them, many Manyema who settled in Ujiji town were *waungwana* and refrained from manual work. They rather possessed plots and let others work for them, did business, like the Arabs with whom they were on good terms, and were, especially in the German colonial period well represented in the towns’ political institutions.<sup>29</sup> This seems an idealistic and generalizing interpretation of the past. Also around Ujiji, there were Manyema, whether dependent or not, who had to gain their lives under harsh working conditions and were looked down upon by the Jiji population and earlier migrants from around the Lake. The German colonial administration assigned plots in rural quarters and ordered many Manyema newcomers from the Belgian territories to farm the land. Manyema mutineers fleeing to German East Africa had a higher social status upon arrival and were partly integrated into the overwhelmingly Muslim

<sup>27</sup> For an original discussion of Kigoma-Ujiji as Swahili town and the impact of locally adapted and produced ‘Swahili’ solutions on Swahiliness in general see Castryck 2014.

<sup>28</sup> See interview 26, 16 October 2012, Kigoma. This is partly supported by early travel accounts into these regions, see e.g. Hutley, 1881, Mohammedanism in Central Africa, Its Influence, Its Professors, SOAS Special Collections, Council for World Mission, London, (CWM), LMS, Central Africa, Incoming Correspondence, Box 4A Folder 2/D.

<sup>29</sup> See interviews 20a, 8 October 2012, Ujiji and 20b, 18 October 2012, Ujiji.

German colonial *Schutztruppe*.<sup>30</sup> However, there are also examples of earlier Manyema migrants, who formed alliances with coastal *waungwana*, the agents of Arab and Swahili merchants, and fought together with them against high food prizes controlled by Jiji market sellers. Moreover, in contrast to the longer established Jiji and Lakist townspeople, Manyema were early to convert to Islam (Brown 1973). According to my interviewees, Manyema slaves or dependents were often taught prayers and introduced into Swahili culture in the households of their masters.<sup>31</sup> In the context of pre-colonial Ujiji, it was sometimes not easy to distinguish free and enslaved persons. Someone who looked like a *mungwana* could very well be a slave agent acting independently of his master while free townspeople did not have the means to adopt coastal dress (Brown 1973). Manyema, who lived in or moved into town after their emancipation, were, like in Tabora, among the town's first African Muslims.<sup>32</sup>

Another option to gain *waungwana* status was to join caravans or expeditions as free or servile porters, guards, workers or, in the case of women, as wives, petty traders and service providers, and to become part of this transethnic caravan culture (Rockel 2006). To disguise one's slave origins by joining the caravan culture was perhaps more difficult in Ujiji, where people were very well aware of their own and others' ethnic origins as well as of their reasons for migration from across the lake, than further to the coast (Zöllner December 2014). In early European descriptions, Manyema men had a very ambiguous reputation as ambitious Muslims and Swahili speakers, but also as ferocious and brutal fighters (and therefore as well suited for being soldiers and guards of expeditions).<sup>33</sup> However, men with slave origins self-styling as 'free gentlemen', *waungwana*, including Manyema, came in increasing numbers to coastal towns to compete with locals in commercial life (Glassman 1995). In comparison to Dar es Salaam, the old caravan endpoint of Bagamoyo had a longer established history of strong social hierarchies. Up to the postcolonial period (alleged) slave ancestry could hamper a marriage, which demonstrates the ongoing efforts of keeping 'coastal' and 'inland' worlds apart, not only in business, but also family affairs. Massive Manyema emigration from Bagamoyo to Dar es Salaam, therefore, was not only explained by Dar es Salaam's better commercial opportunities with portage, port expansion, railway construction and its need for servants at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also with discrimination by local elites against 'upcountry' people.<sup>34</sup> This would support the argument by Brennan and Burton (2007b: 13) who refer to Dar es Salaam as "modern reformulation of a Swahili city" in terms of its openness, "partly due to the lack of dominant founding fathers and an established urban society predating its rapid twentieth century growth". Accordingly, the features of 'big men' in Ujiji, Tabora and Dar es Salaam seem to be closer to what Lonsdale (2002) describes for upcountry Nairobi than for the old coastal town of Mombasa. Most land (at least in the town centers) in these towns was in the hands of Arabs, immigrant Swahili and later Indians and Europeans, and not in

<sup>30</sup> See interviews 28 & 30, 17 October 2012, Machozo. See also Brown 1973.

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. interviews 39, 1 November 2012, Tabora; 20a, 8 October 2012, Ujiji.

<sup>32</sup> See interview 38, 31 October 2012, Tabora. Slavery was not officially abolished in Tanganyika until 1922, but dynamics rooted in colonial economy lead to an increased slave emancipation before World War I, see Deutsch 2006.

<sup>33</sup> See Letter from William G. Stairs to Henry Morton Stanley, Tabora, 9 September 1891, Musée Royal de l'Afrique Central, Tervuren (MRCA) Stanley Archive 1147, 8-9; Rempel 2010.

<sup>34</sup> See interview 8, 18 August 2012, Bagamoyo.

the hands of an old-established local Swahili elite like in Mombasa or Bagamoyo. Most African men formed part of an “aristocracy of labour” (Lonsdale 2002: 215) instead of being property owners, although this did change gradually after the turn of the century. This included Manyema soldiers of the *Schutztruppe* who lived in quarters provided for the *askari* (soldiers) and their families, but also Manyema living in settlements inside town as highlighted by interviewees in Tabora for example in contrast to Nyamwezi settlements at the outskirts.<sup>35</sup> And in all three towns (as well as in Tanga and Kalemie for example) the Manyema mosque provided an early prayer place for the town’s African Muslims and symbolizes Manyema understanding as fellow Muslims in a Muslim town.<sup>36</sup>

Being perceived as a practicing Muslim was indeed one means of gaining respect and status despite once marginalized origins, and there were many religious leaders and learned men among my Manyema interviewees and their families. German colonial officials and missionaries recognized that conversion to Islam was frequent in the coastal areas and in towns along the caravan routes and that some groups, like the Manyema, became overwhelmingly Muslim.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the case of the Manyema mosque in Tabora also reveals tensions with other Muslims, who dominated religious town life, as the Manyema mosque was built only after Manyema elders were excluded from prayers in the Arab Imams house.<sup>38</sup> In a similar vein, influential Arabs in Tabora in 1908 denounced a famous Islamic brotherhood leader, who had a large male and female Manyema following all over the colony, to the Germans. Fearing the growing popularity of brotherhoods among the African population with their more egalitarian and knowledge based approach, the established East African *ulama*, a closely-knit community of learned families, tried with measures like these to keep their influence in religious matters.<sup>39</sup>

Manyema (as well as other newcomers) efforts to gain status as *waungwana* and become accepted members of Swahili urban society gave rise to new forms of boundary drawing and influenced notions of what it meant to be a townsman in Swahili society. As *uungwana* “lost its luster through promiscuous appropriation by ex-slaves” (Brennan 2012: 122), the ‘big men’ began to prefer the social concept of *ustaarabu*, literally ‘becoming Arab’ towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Swahili or Shomvi elites tried to highlight their noble, ‘Arab’, descent in order to confirm their status as civilized townsmen close to ‘Arabs’ in contrast to *waungwana* ex-slaves from the inland. However, as the subsequent rise in the adoption of ‘Swahili’ as ethnic label shows, many new town dwellers took part in this identity switching and claimed coastal patrilineal origins, which also complicated

<sup>35</sup> See for example interview 34, 27 October 2012, Tabora.

<sup>36</sup> In Ujiji there were several mosques in the different quarters where Manyema prayed. However, none of them was named ‘Manyema Mosque’. People with Congolese origins in Ujiji rather referred to their ethnic origin or to other divisions within the Manyema community, e.g. those from the forest region and those from the western shores of the lake. Further away from Ujiji, all these people would be called and see themselves as ‘Manyema’, see McCurdy 1996.

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. Der Kaiserliche Resident Bukoba an das Kaiserliche Gouvernement Dar es Salaam, 7 February 1913, TNA G9/48, 146; Klamroth, Martin (1910/1911): „Beiträge zum Verständnis der religiösen Vorstellungen der Saramo im Bezirk Dar es Salaam“, Zeitschrift für Kolonialsprachen.

<sup>38</sup> See interview 39, 1 November 2012, Tabora.

<sup>39</sup> See „Tangazo“, Kiongozi 45, February 1909; „Ein Lichtblick in der Eingeborenenpolitik des Gouvernements“, DOAZ 11, 9, 3 February 1909; Gerichtsassessor Stier: Urteil gegen Sherif bin Mohamed, 22 May 1909, TNA G9/47. For German attitudes towards Islam see Pesek 2003, for Muslim brotherhoods in Tanzania Nimitz 1980.

matters for colonial officials.<sup>40</sup> Offspring from Manyema women married to Arab or Shirazi men usually take their (grand)fathers identity for granted and do not see themselves as Manyema.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, drawing lines is difficult and also the term *ustaarabu* had its limits to distinguish between ‘civilized’ coastal people and upcountry ‘barbarians’, i.e. newcomers to Swahili society. By the 1920s, a broader understanding of ‘civilization’ also included accumulation of wealth and knowledge (Brennan 2012; Bromber 2006). This may have made it easier for some Manyema, e.g. successful merchants, property owners or learned men, to join the ranks of influential townsmen, but at the same time excluded others. Still, from a Manyema point of view, it is important that despite all these differences and changes over time, as Brown describes for Ujiji, “a common understanding of Swahili, the rhythm of daily prayers, and a sense of community began to bind these townsmen together.” (Brown 1973: 256)

## 4.2 Contested cosmopolitanism in the interwar years

“Urbanity is neither simply when different people live together, nor does it emerge automatically after some time. If the promise becomes reality, that is, if an urban society in that sense actually emerges, it is the outcome of a social process that juxtaposes encounter and distancing.” (Förster 2013: 244)

This quote by Till Förster describes urbanity as process of coping with difference. Indeed, the three towns under consideration had been ethnically mixed from the very beginning, a trend which became further accentuated in the interwar years. Thus, Manyema constituted only one group among the many migrants inhabiting these ‘cosmopolitan’ towns – a label which is often used for Dar es Salaam and seems to promise that the continuing interactions between different groups did have a genuine urbane society as outcome. Clearly there were means to cope with diversity and to incorporate strangers in 19<sup>th</sup> century urban Swahili culture,

“as the greatest strength was probably its openness. The assumption of unanimity in terms of faith, communication and fashion permitted great diversity in terms of ethnicity, economic interests and social traditions.” (Brown 1973: 227)

Accordingly, the “urban melting pot” Dar es Salaam is seen by Deborah Bryceson (2009: 241) as “exceptional in East Africa for a record of relatively little ethnic tension”. This might be true from today’s perspective (leaving rising religious tensions apart) and in comparison to towns in neighboring countries. However, social encounters between different ‘ethnic’ groups were of course not always harmonious. Early Manyema migrants, stigmatized by their upcountry origin and (alleged) slave descent, struggled to become recognized as ‘civilized’ members of Swahili urban society. Nonetheless, these struggles should not lead us to dismiss the label ‘cosmopolitan’,

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<sup>40</sup> People for example tried to get non-native status within the colonial apparatus by claiming (also distant) Arab parentage. Similarly, to ‘Mungwana’, ‘Swahili’ was increasingly dismissed as ethnic self-designation. In Zanzibar, for example, the number of ‘Swahili’ dropped in the 1924 census from 34.000 to 2.000 as it was no longer understood as designating a freeborn coastal Muslim, but rather a slave trying to hide his origins, see Fair 2001.

<sup>41</sup> See interviews 38, 31 October 2012, Tabora and 18, 5 October 2012, Mwanga.

rather the contrary, as Simpson and Kresse (2008: 2) remind us: “Any conception of ‘cosmopolitan society’ [...] ought to reflect the historical struggles on which it builds.” Cosmopolitanism is not simply there in multi-ethnic surroundings, but is a challenge. Critical understandings of cosmopolitanism go beyond European intellectual notions of the *Weltbürger* as well as the diffusion of a global lifestyle from one (Western) center. They rather stress the ability of people to see their place in a larger world and “ways of inhabiting multiple places at once” (Breckenridge et al. 2002: 64)<sup>42</sup> as most important features of cosmopolitanism.

In the interwar years, there were still many Manyema in Tanganyika Territory, who had been born in what had in the meantime become Belgian Congo; others were born east of Lake Tanganyika under Arab, German, Belgian or British rule. Most of them had not lived in one locality only, but, pervasive in the family histories I recorded, in several towns along the old route of caravan trade. The 1931 census counted 16,889 ‘Nyema’ (Manyema) all over the colony, found in “Tabora; and smaller numbers in Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Pangani”.<sup>43</sup> Tabora, in the heart of Nyamwezi country, may be less reputed for its ethnic diversity and cosmopolitan nature than Dar es Salaam, or, for the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ujiji. But there are some sources referring to Tabora’s ethnic diversity in German colonial times. As important node in the 19<sup>th</sup> century caravan trade, it certainly attracted not only Arab and Swahili traders but also African porters, guards, and service providers from the wider Lakes region and the coast. With the establishment of colonial rule, Europeans of various countries, Indians, African soldiers, railway workers and other migrants can be added (Becher 1997). The high percentage of slaves in the district, around 67% in 1900, equally contributed to the ethnic diversity especially of Tabora Township. According to the 1948 census 6,600 Manyema in the district constituted 4% of the overall, clearly Nyamwezi dominated population. In Tabora town, Manyema (2,193) ranked second after the Nyamwezi (3,099) and constituted 20% of the population, followed by Sukuma, Zaramo, Tusi, Wemba and others. Already in German times, there were quite some land owners among the Manyema.<sup>44</sup> In Dar es Salaam, 167 different African groups were counted in 1931, which – together with the European and a substantial Asian population numbering several thousand – demonstrated the growing regional importance of the colonial capital. While most Africans came from the immediate hinterland, like the Zaramo and Rufiji, Manyema were with 1,221 persons among the biggest African migrants group. They were described as best established urban community with their own mosque and freehold cemetery as well as substantial house property in Dar es Salaam’s ethnically mixed African settlements like Kariakoo (Brennan / Burton 2007b: 34-35; Leslie 1963: 49-50). Interestingly, Kigoma-Ujiji was not mentioned at all in this 1931 overview of Manyema ‘tribal distribution’. As later census data illustrates, we can add substantial numbers of Manyema for Kigoma District as well as smaller numbers for towns like Bagamoyo, Dodoma, Mwanza and Iringa.<sup>45</sup> For Kigoma district 69 different

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<sup>42</sup>See further Vertovec / Cohen 2002; Loimeier / Seesemann 2006.

<sup>43</sup> See Census of the Native population of Tanganyika Territory, 1931. Dar es Salaam. Census figures are notoriously unreliable especially when it comes to ethnic labeling and should be seen rather as rough approximations.

<sup>44</sup> See The East African Statistical Department. 1950. African Population of Tanganyika Territory. Geographical and tribal studies. (Source: East African population Census, 1948); Pallaver 2011.

<sup>45</sup> In the 1948 census 2784 Manyema (5% of the population) were counted in Kigoma district, most of them located within the Luiche Federation, of which Ujiji formed part. Though their numbers were smaller, Manyema constituted

ethnic groups and among them 20 groups with Congolese origin were estimated in 1928.<sup>46</sup> To establish the exact number of 'Manyema' in the district is difficult. Some people continued to refer to themselves with their Congolese ethnic origins like Kusu or Bangubangu, and there are no detailed figures for urban Ujiji.<sup>47</sup> After a short visit to Ujiji Township an officer in 1930 reported besides 150 to 200 Asians and Arabs around 8,000 "mostly detribalized" natives.<sup>48</sup> This referred in official parlance to the common description of 'Swahilized' townspeople without (or at least for outsiders not visible) distinctive 'tribal' markers, again a hint to the integrative nature of Swahili urban culture.

The German colonial administration had adopted the *liwali* (governor) system in Muslim urban settings and appointed 'strangers' to various political positions, allocated land for newcomers or recognized ownership rights of long-time (also immigrant) residents and used Swahili as official language (Brown 1973; Iliffe 1979). In all these points Manyema profited, as they were among the early permanent inhabitants of the towns, in contrast to those who resided few months in town before they returned home, like Nyamwezi in Dar es Salaam or Ha in Kigoma. Thus, Manyema had been able to get a strong foothold in the towns, exemplified by the considerable number of Manyema house owners in central African quarters in interwar Dar es Salaam as compared to the original local Zaramo or Shomvi population (Brennan / Burton 2007b: 33-34, 37). In struggles about political and religious power, rituals and resources, however, Manyema were continuously being reminded of their migrant status, as the cleavage often went along the migrants/locals line. In Dar es Salaam, conflicts between the Zaramo and Shomvi *wenyeji* (owners) of town, and more progressive and economically successful *watu wa kuja* (migrants), including Nubi, Manyema and Zulu, rose about the control of the main Islamic institutions in town. (Brennan 2012: 103-106, 139-50; Said 1998: 44-49). In Ujiji, a violent conflict remembered as 'war' evolved between earlier and later migrants of Congolese origin, the Watanganyika (people from the lake shores) and the Arabiani Congo (people from the Manyema forest region). (McCurdy 1996) Thus, while townspeople were in general aware of the multiple worlds their inhabitants felt part of, and would for example celebrate their unity as fellow Muslims integrated into a global Muslim network (Zöllner 2012), times of crisis revealed major divisions of the towns' cosmopolitan population.

In her historical analysis of colonial Zanzibar, Anne Bang (2008) asks whether the colonial factor changed constellations of cosmopolitanism or restricted cosmopolitan thinking and acting. Certainly, colonial conquest and rule directly brought new actors to the Tanganyikan towns: Europeans of different national and occupational backgrounds, South Asians and Africans from all over the colony and beyond. Hence, colonialism broadened the scope of people living in a town, which intensified the challenge of a cosmopolitan urban society. British rule in Tanganyika Territory had in the 1920s enforced initial German projects of racial segregation and as Bryceson

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also around 5% of the population in Iringa, Dodoma or Mwanza. See The East African Statistical Department. 1950. African Population of Tanganyika Territory. Geographical and tribal studies. (Source: East African population Census, 1948).

<sup>46</sup> See Kigoma District Book, TNA.

<sup>47</sup> See Kigoma District Book, TNA.

<sup>48</sup> Officer of the Commissioner of Police and Prisons Dar es Salaam to CS Dar es Salaam, 22 July 1930, TNA SF 12218.

(2009: 249) states for Dar es Salaam, “the cultural compass of town life was being radically reoriented from that of *ustaarabu* to racial rigidity and exclusivity of ‘non-natives’”. The legal divisions along racial lines and between ‘natives’ and ‘non-natives’ translated into spatial segregation and became decisive for town life in the interwar years. In Dar es Salaam, as James Brennan (2012) demonstrates, economic conflicts united Africans of diverse origins for example against rising prices driven by Indian businessmen in Kariakoo, a quarter which was theoretically reserved for Africans. Also Pan-Islamic welfare organizations with Indian or Arab leaders, which had previously united Muslims of all ethnic backgrounds, were increasingly criticized by African Muslims as paternalistic and they set out to found their own associations. Hence, segregationist policies together with strengthened economic competition led to an increased racial awareness also in other spheres of town life. Conflicts like the above mentioned as well as subsequent initiatives along racial lines, hint at the vulnerability of the cosmopolitan urban project.

### 4.3 Modern townsmen in the 1950s

The last part of this paper introduces politically active and well-connected African townsmen, in order to discuss in how far migrants, and among them Manyema, shaped urban life in the 1950s. Of course, African political awareness and organization started already in the interwar years. The Zulu Kleist Sykes, for example, an influential Muslim born in 1894 and strongly connected to Manyema leaders in interwar Dar es Salaam, is portrayed as “the townsman” in Iliffe’s biographical collection “Modern Tanzanians” (1973). However, political activity was not restricted to Dar es Salaam, as the bulk of historical works on urban Tanganyika may suggest. The interrelated biographies of two politicians, the Manyema Ali Ponda and the Nyamwezi Hassan Suleiman (Hajivayanis et al. 1973), bring us from Dar es Salaam to Tabora and Dodoma, where Manyema were said to be especially active in TANU’s forerunner, the African Association.<sup>49</sup> “Modern” in this edited volume from 1973 refers to “Tanzanians who concentrated their energies on educating themselves, seeking economic progress, and forming small self-help organizations which could aid Africans to advance.” (Hajivayanis et al. 1973: 227) These evolutionist visions could best be fulfilled in towns and both politicians “were essentially townsmen whose careers were to take them to many parts of Tanzania before they came to settle in Dodoma.” (Hajivayanis et al. 1973: 233) The Manyema Ali Maneno Ponda was born in Tabora in 1902 and went to German government school there, worked in a bank in Morogoro, was trained as a teacher in Dar es Salaam after the war, and held teaching positions at various schools before finally settling in Dodoma in 1931. In 1933, he was elected Assistant Secretary of Dodoma’s newly founded branch of the Dar es Salaam based African Association, which stressed African advancement and unity in response to anti-Asian feelings discussed above. In Ali Ponda’s words it was an association for “men of any religion and any tribe and any condition, it is for the black people of Africa.” (Hajivayanis et al. 1973: 238) The African Association involved many civil servants, Muslim businessmen like Kleist

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<sup>49</sup> Manyema contribution to TANU formation through the use of football, dance groups and other networks is still well remembered in Tabora, for example in my interviews with Sheikh Rehani Bilali and catholic missionaries. See also Said 1998. Similarly, many Manyema interview partners in Ujiji stressed prominent Manyema male and female involvement in the spread of TANU, e.g. interview 16, 4 October 2012, Ujiji.

Sykes or the Manyema Mzee Sudi in Dar es Salaam and Mzee Mtumwa Maksudi of Bagamoyo, as well as religious leaders like the Manyema sheikhs Ramiya in Bagamoyo or Mtumwa Selemani in Ujiji (Hajivayanis et al. 1973; Nimitz 1980 Said 1998).<sup>50</sup> The association was primarily concerned with daily issues of town life like funerals, visits, arbitration, coordination of organizations and representation to the Township Authority. During the Second World War it developed a more radical political stance, and through the help of the two Dodoma politicians massively expanded on a territorial scale, until it was in 1954 finally transformed into TANU, the nationalist mass movement under the leadership of Julius Nyerere (Hajivayanis et al. 1973).

Manyema today are proud of their involvement in the nationalist struggle. However, they partly feel that they were pushed aside by a younger generation of mission educated Africans, who took over TANU in the late 1950s, and also that the Muslim contribution to the independence struggle is not valued enough in official postcolonial historiography (Said 1998). Still, many Manyema seemed to identify strongly with the association's focus on African unity and, through their firm integration into town life on economic, occupational, cultural and political levels, embodied what was then understood as 'modern townsmen'.

Coming back to Leslie's description of Manyema as "citizens of Dar es Salaam par excellence", I want to have a closer look on the context of this statement he made in the 1950s. The massive growth of most African cities beginning with the Second World War often exceeded the capacities to provide adequate service and infrastructure and posed major challenges to the administration of the towns. This was also true for Dar es Salaam, whose African population grew from 26,000 in 1938 to 40,000 in 1940 and to 93,363 at independence in 1961, which led to ever worsening living conditions. The 1947 general strike, economic growth, and the new policy of 'development', prompted increasing governmental action in the 1950s like the construction of planned suburbs with governmental housing quarters and plots for individual building, investment in hospitals, schools and community centers. These measures were part of the late colonial policy of stabilization, "which envisaged a class of more settled urban Africans enjoying better infrastructure and amenities, and better working conditions." (Brennan / Burton 2007b: 48) This was a big step, as towns until then had been seen by colonialists and researchers alike as modern anomalies, and town dwellers either as short-term migrants or as 'uprooted', 'detrilled' people, uncontrolled by 'tribal' authorities and structures.<sup>51</sup> Leslie's study was part of this new project, and following a functionalist approach he gathered sociological data in order to cope with the problems of urbanization. The colonial administration envisaged well educated newcomers to form this new urban middle class, as can be seen by the government housing quarters, which were less dense than the Swahili neighborhoods and were inhabited by many well educated Christian employees with their nuclear families. However, the notion of 'stability' and 'settlement' was clearly also behind Leslie's description of Manyema. He regards house property, length of stay, interconnectedness as well as status in town as important means to describe the nucleus of

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<sup>50</sup> See also my interviews in the different towns.

<sup>51</sup> This dichotomizing view of living in town as a break with a traditional, rural past was convincingly been challenged by social scientists of the Rhodes-Livingston Institute in Lusaka in the 1940s. See further Ferguson 1999, Simone 2005.

citizens of Dar es Salaam, in contrast to others, who just come and go. Manyema men and women were among the politically important group of African landlords and landladies, numbering around 3.000 in 1939 and according to an interview partner some Manyema women even donated houses as waqf property to the Manyema community.<sup>52</sup> They were the only Africans to have their own freehold cemetery, they had their own mosque, but had no “ethnic” association as, according to Leslie “they feel, as do the Zaramo, that they are the ‘original people’ of Dar es Salaam and, therefore, they have no need of a special organization to protect them.” (1963: 49) Finally, Leslie regards Manyema as “settled”, simply because they are among those who

“have no other home: those born and bred here, such as the Manyema and the Nubi, whose original homes in the Congo and the ‘Sudan’ now mean nothing to them, who never visit there to see the relatives, or even remember the names of the original villages or the language which they used to speak.” (1963: 254)

In this sense Leslie understood Manyema as the ‘most settled’ of Dar es Salaams inhabitants and therefore embodying the very vision of ‘new modern townsmen.’

## 5 Conclusion: towards connected urban histories

The portrayal of Dar es Salaam’s Manyema as having no other homes seems to pose a challenge to my conceptualization of Manyema in Tanzania as a well-connected, mobile group of actors. It is true, that Manyema did not have homes in the rural hinterlands of the towns they were living in, in comparison to many Zaramo in Dar es Salaam, Nymawezi in Tabora, or Ha in Kigoma-Ujiji. It is also true that the first, and in parts also the second generation, did not often go back to what had then become Belgian Congo, partly because of the circumstances of their coming, partly because of the difficulties of obtaining permissions and the hardships of the long travel. But Leslie referred to Manyema in his area of study, Dar es Salaam, where it is probable that people with a slavery background did not know or did not like to be reminded of their places of origin. A look at the other end of the Manyema Diaspora in Tanzania reveals that closer to the Congo, in Ujiji; still today, many elders do perform the old ethnic languages and partly visited their families in Congo or were travelling and working across the borders. And, most importantly, life histories and hints in archives tell us a different story of settledness. Even if their Congolese homes meant nothing to them, many Manyema were very well linked to other towns, most notably to Kigoma-Ujiji, the Manyema homeland within the colony, so to say. Manyema spent parts of their lives in other towns of the Manyema urban network, they commuted between towns or just visited them for a short time to attend festivals, visit healers or to look for women, to learn at governmental schools or in *madrassa*, to visit and help relatives, to work and do business, or to retire close to their children. Thus, Manyema urban history is not only a story of integration into various Swahili towns, but a history of being at home in several towns, exemplified by the elders of the Manyema mosque, who provided me with their mobile life histories as well as with further contacts in the various towns

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<sup>52</sup> Interview 18, 5 October 2012, Mwanga.

they were living in over the course of their lives. Elísio Macamo (2013: 295) connects this notion of mobility with the very definition of cities:

“The decision to call these hubs [of social interaction] ‘cities’ or ‘urban settings’ may be arbitrary if we bear in mind the extreme mobility of the individuals who produce them and the ties which often bind them to settings over and beyond territorial bounds and social landscapes of such places that we call ‘cities’ and ‘urban settings’.”

Tracing the history of a mobile migrant group in a specific town helps at understanding shifting visions of urbanity and connected social practices of integration. Furthermore, the mobile (inter)urban life histories invite to think more intensely about concrete connections between towns and the resulting mutual influences on town life.

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# How to be Middle Class in Nairobi

## Lifestyles of middle-income milieus and their relation to Nairobi's city structure

Florian Stoll

### 1 Introduction

Whenever we hear the name of a city, lively imaginations come to our mind.<sup>1</sup> Paris stands for fashion and elegance, New York is the city that never sleeps, and Rio de Janeiro can be the city of God or the world's most beautiful city, in spite of all its poverty. After all, we have vivid associations of urban spaces and how people live there. These associations may be stereotypical and simplistic, but they contain a true element which abstract statistics about a city cannot tell. On the contrary, particular imaginations of the urban refer to a city's unique character and to specific forms of living in a place. Subsequently, it is necessary for an understanding of cities to study typical practices, values and local meaning structures in addition to objectified socioeconomic data, geographic structures or the demographic composition. Of course, it is important to confront imaginations of places with results of empirical research to gain deep insights into a local context. But it is a fundamental theoretical and methodological question by which analysis we can decipher the specific character of a city. Therefore, this article begins with a general question: How is it possible to study local phenomena systematically from a sociological perspective? And how does this analysis improve our understanding of local phenomena and the particular cities?

For finding answers to these and more questions, this article examines 'middle-class' milieus in Nairobi as an example for local phenomena and their relation to local structures and practices. The text uses the approach of the "Eigenlogik" of cities (Berking / Löw 2008; Berking 2012; Löw 2012), the distinctiveness of cities, and combines this approach with the analysis of socioculturally different groups, social milieus (Neubert / Stoll 2015), in the middle-income stratum of Kenya's capital Nairobi. The article aims at reconstructing how Nairobi's distinctiveness is enacted in values, practices and other characteristics of two milieus in Nairobi's

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<sup>1</sup> The empirical data are from research in the project "Middle class on the rise" which is part of the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies. Other members of the project are Erdmute Alber, Lena Kroeker, Maike Voigt and Dieter Neubert. The empirical dataset is based mainly on participant observation and 90 biographical interviews carried out by Florian Stoll in Nairobi and Mombasa from 2013 to 2015, in the course of four field stays with a total length of 8 months.

'middle classes', the *Religious Christians* and the *Young Professionals*. Also, the paper can contribute to the question which concepts and methods are useful for the study of urban contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **2 Are African cities "ordinary cities"?**

In Studies on African cities, many authors discuss if there is a typical urban structure and if there are certain sets of commonalities that are typical for African cities – in contrast to "Western" or "Northern" cities. No doubt, there are some commonalities, and certain patterns exist in many African cities (Freund 2007). Nevertheless, it seems to be impossible to narrow down the different settings on "the" African city as there are multiple paths of historical development, diverging economic and political structures, local cultural arrangements and global impacts that lead to a variety of urbanities. Cedric Janowicz (2008a: 242) points at an argument by Jennifer Robinson (2002: 532) who sees a blind spot in the systematic study of African cities. For Robinson this shortcoming is a consequence of a Euro-centric science: For a long time, an assumed dichotomy of developed and underdeveloped cities has led to the prevalent imagination that "Third World"-cities are fundamentally different from European and North American cities. Subsequently, theories on cities from Western contexts have been considered as inadequate to understand African cities. Robinson has opposed this view because "these developmentalist city experiences do not contribute to expanding the definition of city-ness: rather they are drawn on to signify its observe, what cities are not" (ibid.; quote from Janowicz 2008a: 243). Therefore, Robinson proclaims to study African cities as "ordinary cities" (2006) instead of stating fundamental differences without understanding cities in Africa and other parts of the Global South.

Similarly, Cedric Janowicz (2008a: 231) points to the fact that there is no "Africa" as a homogenous unit. Instead, it is crucial to examine the specific local contexts and to consider particular conditions. Janowicz emphasizes under reference to Ulf Hannerz that there exists much research in cities but little research about cities as objects of knowledge. Correspondingly, this text examines a correlation between Nairobi as a specific city and the local characteristics of middle-class milieus without making too many conceptual assumptions. The distinctiveness of cities is a methodology which is also applicable to urban settings in Kenya, as Helmuth Berking (2014) demonstrates by the example of Mombasa.

## **3 Sociology of space and the distinctiveness of cities**

This article considers cities as environments that modify the lifestyles, forms of knowledge, social actions and other aspects of their inhabitants in a specific way. Following this line of argument, the article takes a spatial approach which examines a city – here Nairobi – as space which consists of certain built, social and symbolic structures that influence forms of living, group boundaries, movement patterns and forms of action in the city. This approach assumes that each city has a particular 'intrinsic logic' that consists of many influences and affects the life of its inhabitants in

different ways. Subsequently, Nairobians produce, reproduce and change through their actions the local spaces, customs, practices, values, idioms, and, therefore, the city structure. A fundamental theoretical background for this use of the 'intrinsic logic of cities' is Martina Löw's *Sociology of Space* (cf. Löw 2001; 2008). Another central source of the approach of the intrinsic logic is the research of Helmuth Berking which has its roots in the globalization debate and Urban Anthropology (cf. Berking 2006).

Martina Löw uses a relational conceptualization of space that combines processes of the constitution of space with the study of significant influences. Specifically, this frame includes the relations between built spaces, their performative reproduction through individuals' actions, all kind of symbolic elements and other aspects of urban life. Relational, here, means that the analysis considers all influences from a dynamic perspective which can integrate changes as well. This theory reconstructs the constitution of a single space as an interplay between space's structural basis, and those practices that maintain or modify spatial structures.

Martina Löw's approach allows studying urban space as a multidimensional structure on the one hand as well as specific local actions and processes which (re)produce this space on the other hand. She describes the dynamic correlation between the multidimensional space and its preservation through specific forms of social action with reference to Anthony Giddens' (1990) theory of structuration as a dualistic connection (cf. Löw 2001: 16): Both moments, space as a multidimensional structure and action are necessary elements to understand the constitution of space. It is not possible to isolate space from action because there is a dialectical relation between space as a multilayered entity – encompassing all areas of life – and social action that depends on from this space and is, similarly, the creator of space (cf. Löw 2008: 31ff).

The two core processes *spacing* and *acts of synthesis* are crucial for the emergence of space because they mediate structure and action (cf. Löw 2008: 35-41; 2001: 158-172). *Spacing* analyses how individuals, social goods and cultural codes are placed in an order to form spatial arrangements. *Acts of synthesis* means the individuals' capability of perceiving, thinking and remembering the spacing of individuals and social goods in a coherent and steady frame. Routinized and repeated action maintains structures, whereas changed social action transforms spaces. According to Löw (2001), space is interwoven with aspects such as class and gender. Spaces are not neutral but derive their particular characters from the social positions of those who are in these spaces.

Martina Löw's sociological theory of space helps to understand the 'intrinsic logic of cities' as it has the capability to conceptualize cities as multidimensional spaces which consider various aspects of local structures and typical practices in a theoretical frame. The hermeneutic approach of the 'intrinsic logic of cities' (cf. Berking / Löw 2008; Berking 2012; Löw 2012) aims at understanding the specific local relations as a 'logic' that has a considerable impact on all social phenomena in a place. Specifically, the intrinsic logic considers cultural codes, meaning horizons and local practices which are connected to "collective and lasting action patterns" (Löw 2012: 303). According to this methodology it is possible to analyze specific forms of 'local knowledge'

and typical ways how things are done. The intrinsic logic is connected to the most relevant influences of a city but does not derive local cultural phenomena from economic or social structures.

Helmuth Berking describes specific local attitudes with the concept of *doxa* – perceptions, ideas and certain ways how things are done in a city. The notion *doxa* goes back to Plato, and has been established in contemporary Sociology by Bourdieu. The notion of *doxa* is as well useful to study the local character of social phenomena:

“Urban *doxa* is the background melody that can be heard in each and every performance of city life. [...] This doxical sense of place in relation to all non-urban spaces as well as to all other cities has its individual and local qualities” (Berking 2012: 321).

The following empirical part on ‘middle class’ milieus in Nairobi demonstrates that certain values and qualities can become something like a second nature for the inhabitants of a city. In contrast to Bourdieu, this text does not assume that class and forms of capital are sufficient to understand groups, as it is necessary to take into account socio-cultural differentiation and specific local forms of action addition to class. For instance, as Michèle Lamont has demonstrated, the drawing of symbolic boundaries can take several forms – by cultural, moral and economic distinction – depending on the local and national meaning structures (cf. Lamont 1992). Likewise, the ‘intrinsic logic’ of cities is the basis for a methodology that can operationalize the concept of second nature, as it enables to study how a city influences ideas and practices of individuals.

Whereas Löw, Berking and other authors refrain from talking about the habitus of a city in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu, they assume that there is a correlation between the specific character of a city and most areas of life. In particular, the inhabitants of Nairobi express socioeconomic differences as well as socio-cultural lifestyles to a higher degree and in culturally different ways than inhabitants of other Kenyan cities like Mombasa, Kisumu or Eldoret. While there are discussions (cf. Berking 2013; Frank et al. 2013; Kemper / Vogelpohl 2011; Siebel 2013) about the intrinsic logic and its limits, this text uses the methodology as a tool for empirical research. Florian Huber applies the concept for a comparison and shows in a multi-sited study that there is not one universal process of gentrification as gentrification processes differ fundamentally in Mexico, Vienna and Chicago (cf. Huber 2012). Apart from many studies in Europe and comparative work, research on local influences of food distribution in Accra (cf. Janowicz 2008 b) and local forms of knowledge in Mombasa (cf. Berking 2014) demonstrate that African cities can be studied with the methodology of the intrinsic logic. Similarly, this text elaborates the sociocultural differentiation of ‘middle class’ milieus in Nairobi exemplarily, with reference to other Kenyan cities.

## 4 The debate on 'middle classes' in Africa

Because of economic growth in Africa over the last two decades, a significant percentage of the populations in many African countries have begun to enjoy enhanced personal wealth. Consequently, since around the year 2010 a debate about African 'middle classes' has emerged. Development organizations, media in the global North and African media as well as academics from a wide range of disciplines have begun to discuss this newly discovered group of assumed 'middle classes'.

The famous report by the African Development Bank (2011) and other authors (for an overview see Darbon / Toulabour 2013; Lentz 2015; Neubert / Stoll 2015) have concluded that there is a new social group, one who enjoys higher income and better consumption possibilities that deserves to be called 'middle class'. Also, some authors hope that these 'middle classes' could be carriers of economic change or democratic development. Critical voices like Dominique Darbon and Comi Toulabour (2013) emphasize that the majority of these so-called 'middle classes' remains highly vulnerable. Therefore, Darbon and Toulabour doubt that the concept makes sense in the African context because crucial implications of Western 'middle classes' as a decent life with consumption and saving, a secure future and a financially stable situation are mostly missing. Instead, Darbon and Toulabour propose the concept of "small prosperity groups" (Darbon / Toulabour 2013: 8) to describe the modest economic improvement of the vast majority of the so-called African 'middle classes'. Nevertheless, even Darbon and Toulabour admit that there have been substantial changes for many million Africans – in different degrees in the different regions, countries and places.

This text will use the notion of "middle class" for groups in Africa which are neither poor nor rich because the relative improvement of many individuals from the lower economic strata can justify the use of the term. This is particularly true when the specific African context is taken into account and when the term is used for empirical research without projections from Euro-American 'middle classes'. Furthermore, this text does not compare 'middle classes' in the Global North and Africa, as it is concerned with forms of socio-cultural differentiation among 'middle class' milieus and specific local characteristics in Nairobi. This perspective – which results mainly from collaboration with Dieter Neubert (cf. Neubert 2014; Neubert / Stoll 2015) – critiques the widespread idea of a homogenous "African middle class" because it shows the importance of socio-cultural characteristics which reach beyond class as a limited income stratum. Additionally, this research emphasizes the influence of the local on boundaries and typical characteristics of 'middle class' milieus.

## 5 Social milieus: sociocultural and local differentiation of groups

According to Dieter Neubert class is not an adequate analytical tool to study social groups in Africa as influences like ethnicity, relations to the extended family, urban-rural ties transcend a vertical analysis (cf. Neubert 2005: 182-189). Therefore, studies of vertical structures with clearly

separated poor, middle and high-income households of nuclear families do not describe social relations in African societies convincingly. In many African countries, there are complex forms of urban-rural connections and ethnic differentiations which do not necessarily overlap with socioeconomic boundaries. The class concept implies more than being part of a certain income stratum: Since Karl Marx class has been described as a group in the same socioeconomic position that shares certain cultural characteristics like values, typical habits, and political views. Unfortunately, in English-speaking academia, the term 'class' is used without distinction in a descriptive way for income strata, without acknowledging the cultural implications of the class notion. Because of the flaws in conceptualizing class, German sociologists, since the 1980s, begun to discuss alternatives. It had become more and more evident that an analysis of vertical stratification is not sufficient to understand social structure: In the stratification of European societies in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the socioeconomic positions, professions, and lifestyles mostly overlapped. Since the 1960s, the impacts of deindustrialization, the rise of postmaterialism and other developments led to new elements of lifestyles in Germany and other Western democracies. Therefore, German Sociology developed new concepts to examine socio-cultural groups that share values, common ways of spending leisure time and other aspects of class phenomena and lifestyles. These aspects do not necessarily correlate with income levels or professions – as the class concept assumes. The socio-cultural analysis is linked to the 'milieu' concept and to the more flexible concept of 'lifestyles' (for an overview on milieus see Isenböck et al. 2014; Neubert / Stoll 2015: 11 ff., and for lifestyles see Otte / Rössel 2012).

While Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of culture in *Distinction* (1984) has been important for this debate, milieu theorists refer to vertical stratification and to Bourdieu in different ways. Michael Vester et al. (2001) see in the German social structure a strong connection between class and the realities of life – due to emerging differences in values or leisure activities in the same income stratum – which milieu studies can consider. Other uses of the milieu notion are more descriptive and have a stronger focus on socio-cultural elements like attitudes or forms of leisure activity (cf. Hradil 1987; Schulze 1993). These descriptive milieu studies use shared cultural characteristics as a starting point and do not take class divisions for granted. The development of the milieu concept is closely linked to social research and market research, for instance by the SIGMA-Institute (cf. Ascheberg 2006) and the SINUS-Institute (cf. Flaig et al. 1993; Sinus 2009). All versions of milieu analysis mentioned here aim at describing the social structure as a whole, through the examination of socio-culturally differentiated groups. This perspective is rather meso-micro and describes crucial sets of characteristics. In spite of the reference to ethnographic elements, the analysis does not describe individuals in detail.

Another version of milieu research has been developed by phenomenologists who consider small life worlds as micro-milieus (cf. Grathoff 1989; Hitzler / Honer 1984; Rebstein / Schnettler 2014; Zifonun / Cindark 2004). These studies examine milieus as communities of individuals with certain shared dispositions (cf. Bohnsack 2007). Moreover, Hitzler et al. (2005) take milieus as loosely connected contexts similar to scenes or subcultures.

This text applies a descriptive version of the milieu concept that focuses on empirically founded

socio-cultural characteristics of groups from research in Nairobi. 'Descriptive' means the reconstruction of a social reality by outcomes of empirical research, instead of reliance on a comprehensive theoretical explanation. The advantage of such an empirical focus is that it can integrate African, Kenyan and specific local characteristics such as the importance of the extended family or religion for certain milieus.

## **6 The contribution of the urban perspective for the analysis of 'middle classes' in Kenya**

'Middle classes' are not just an abstract statistical group in a certain income stratum but the concept implies, additionally, all kind of cultural aspects like typical values, lifestyles and visions of the future. Nevertheless, 'middle classes' are in every case first the result of a certain societal and local context which implies all kind of economic, cultural and many other aspects. While there are different economic and political systems, 'middle classes' exist only under certain economic conditions because a certain amount of income is necessary to reach typical characteristics which separate the middle income groups from the poor. Furthermore, as Michèle Lamont (1992) has proven in "Money. Moral. Manners" in a comparison of the French and the North American upper middle strata that there are no universal mechanisms of distinction as Pierre Bourdieu has assumed. Lamont shows that crucial sets of meanings and symbolic ascriptions differ in societal contexts strongly. Secondly, there is the specific local context which goes beyond a societal differentiation because every place has its own conditions and rules. Strictly speaking every empirical analysis of society must take the special conditions of a place into account. The division between the 'societal' and the 'local' is purely analytical because in reality both dimensions are intertwined and it is hard to differentiate their effects. However, a comparison of the same phenomenon, here 'middle class' milieus, in different settings allows to differentiate characteristics in every context. To a certain degree it is possible to describe "societal" influences – often, but not always overlapping with state borders – which can be found in all cities in the same size. For instance, we find on one hand urban-rural ties (Geschiere / Gugler 1998) of many inhabitants to their home regions in the larger Kenyan cities. On the other hand, these urban-rural ties take in every city a specific 'local' form according to the geographic settings of urban and rural home, specific local power relations and ascribed meanings: In Nairobi the ethnic group of the Kikuyu is considered as the undisputed majority. They are perceived by themselves and by other ethnic groups as the powerful tribe in economic and political respects. The rural homes of the Kikuyus' ancestors are often in the close Central Province and therefore it is easy for members of this group to visit their rural home regularly. In contrast to this, Kikuyu are perceived in many ways very different in Mombasa: They are often considered as intruders who threaten with money, business knowledge and disrespect the work places and the life of people from the coast. Moreover, Kikuyu are a minority in Mombasa. Being from the ethnic group of the Kikuyu has therefore different meanings in Nairobi and Mombasa.

Similarly, a phenomenon like 'middle class' milieu can only be fully understood when it is

considered in its local environment, for instance typical local forms of distinction between milieus, the specific local composition of milieus and even the existence of certain groups. Whereas there is a relevant number of flashy and career oriented *Young Professionals* in Nairobi, this group does not exist in a comparative proportion in Mombasa. This can be connected as well to the economic structure of both cities, the many international companies and NGOs in Nairobi but even to specific local forms of culture and taste. In contrast to Nairobi, one finds in Mombasa members of the Swahili who are a well established group in the city with specific socio-cultural elements like typical forms of family structures, religious muslim practices and housing.

## 7 Middle class milieus in Nairobi

It is crucial to consider those elements which are typical for Africa and Kenya because urban-rural relations have multiple forms and can differ from urbanization in other world regions: In Africa and more specific in Kenya there are e.g. different ways how people are bound to cities: For decades Kenyans came as “peasants in the city” (Mangin 1970) to Nairobi with the aim to earn money and to reinvest it in their homes on the countryside. This is no longer the dominant lifestyle. A new generation of “middle class” Nairobians has taken their place, which has different lifestyles with certain socio-cultural elements. “Middle class” Nairobians have at least some income above the physical reproduction to spend. With these possibilities they can make economic decisions how to invest their money (e.g. for land on the countryside, the own business or for clothes, electronic gadgets and cars). They can thus be differentiated by their lifestyles which include values, future orientations and many other aspects. Yet all ‘middle class’ milieus are part of Nairobi’s modernity and it does not make sense to divide up milieus with more and less rural orientation as modern and traditional.

Based on fieldwork in Nairobi, Dieter Neubert and the author distinguished several milieus in that city (cf. Neubert / Stoll 2015: 8). As a result of the empirical research, it has been possible to identify a *Neo-Traditional milieu* with strong ties to the extended family, to the rural home and the ethnic community. There is a milieu of *Social Climbers* whose members focus on extended working hours and high saving rates on the social advancement of their nuclear family. Members of the *Pragmatic-Domestic Milieu* have little career ambitions and live with modest consumption. They spend most of their time at home, but they have active connections to the extended family as well. There is a *Cosmopolitan-Liberal Milieu* which has a strong orientation towards civil and classical democratic values. Members of this milieu position themselves against clientelism and tribalism while they advocate human rights. Also, there are *hinduistic* or *Muslim* (micro) milieus of which there are not enough data yet but which are much smaller than the *Christian milieu*.

Members of these milieus have different values, elements of lifestyle (e.g. leisure time activities) and imaginations of the future. In order to find the constitutive elements of each milieu, we have examined systematically the aspects demography/social position, space and places, aims in life, work/performance, image of society, family/partnership/gender roles, leisure/communication, everyday aesthetics, ideals and role models (cf. *ibid.*: 9; Flaig et al. 1993: 71).

The data collection followed the strategy to maximize the differences of contrasts with the aim of finding socio-cultural differences. Therefore, the starting point were groups in Nairobi's middle-income stratum who are clearly visible in public spaces. These groups, such as the *Young Professionals* who meet at typical bars and clubs, were contrasted with groups who appeared to have opposite traits, for instance, the *Christian Religious*. In the next steps those groups who are more difficult to access came in the focus of attention. In particular, those who spend much time at home with their families or live in closed ethnic networks. The main methods were interviews and participant observation. Also, more data as media reports or information from other studies (for example Spronk 2012) were helpful.

To illustrate the socio-spatial methodology, the empirical part examines milieus, lifestyles, symbolic boundaries and forms of social action among 'middle class' milieus in Nairobi. Data on milieus and local characteristics in Mombasa serve as a point of comparison to demonstrate which aspects are specific to the urban context of Nairobi. The text reconstructs the milieus of the *Christian Religious* and the *Young Nairobi Professionals* as empirical examples. Both milieus show different but city specific influences of Nairobi on socio-cultural group differentiation: the milieu of the *Christian Religious* exists in other Kenyan cities as well. Nevertheless, this milieu exhibits traits which are very typical for Nairobi, such as the placing of high importance on the display of material wellbeing, or a high density of participation in events in the church communities. These elements are less important in the milieu of the *Christian Religious* in other cities like Mombasa where a large part of the population consists of Muslims and where the author found less competition among Christian communities. In contrast, the *Young Professionals* exist as a milieu only in Nairobi and not in other Kenyan cities. The *Young Nairobi Professionals* are, therefore, to a high degree bound to Nairobi, and its specific social organizations.

## 8 Example I: *Christian Religious* in Nairobi

The members of this milieu are committed Christians who share their religious convictions with their parish (cf. Neubert / Stoll 2015: 11f.). These dedicated *Christians* participate in several activities of their church community per week, namely, church services, bible groups and the counseling of troubled church members. Consequently, members of this milieu spend a large share of their leisure time out of work with these activities. It is not surprising that the church community is usually the main social network for *Christian Religious* and that they often have friends in their congregation. While the vast majority of Kenyans are Christians, members of this milieu are much more active in the church community and follow a more rigid interpretation of their religious norms. For instance, members of this milieu refrain – at least in public and in their statements in interviews – from alcohol and premarital sex. Furthermore, they regularly pay the tithe, ten percent of their income, to the church. The intensity of these practices marks a difference to many other Christians who are less active at church, more open for worldly pleasures and less reliable in their financial contributions to their parish. In contrast, for instance, to the milieu of the *Neo-Traditional*, members of the *Christian* milieu legitimize their values by referring to religion and not to ethnic traditions. While many dedicated *Christians* have urban-rural

connections, these contacts are individual, and not the emotional and ideal main point of reference of the milieu as a collective whole.

Likewise, most members of this milieu have a clear career orientation and are determined to be economically successful. It is not considered as a contradiction to be a committed Christian and to strive for wealth. On the contrary, in most churches, the display of material prosperity through the wearing of expensive clothing, the driving of cars from good brands, and the making of donations to the community can raise a member's status. This is clearly visible in some Pentecostal communities in Nairobi whose idea systems combine an intense spiritual program with an appreciation of personal development and economic improvement. Among these Pentecostals, and to a smaller degree in many other communities, professional success is considered as an expression of God's favor. This brings to mind Max Weber's reading of Protestantism as a driving force for the development of the capitalist economy (cf. Weber (2001) [1920]). While there are differences between the groups of Christians in Kenya, the milieu analysis focuses on the lifestyle of dedicated church members – in contrast to other milieus like *Neo-Traditionals*, a stability-oriented pragmatic milieu, to social climbers or to *Young Professionals*. Therefore, it is appropriate to emphasize the commonalities of values and practices which the *Christian Religious* share.

All the aspects described so far are not limited to the *Christian* milieu in Nairobi but can also be found in Mombasa, Kisumu and Eldoret. In addition to these features, there are specific local influences that give the Christian milieu in Nairobi a specific form: According to interviews and observations the career orientation and the business activities of many *Christian Religious* are stronger – or in the language of many Nairobians 'more aggressive' – than of comparative groups in the other Kenyan cities. This strong business orientation seems to be a local meaning structure of Nairobi – an element of the city's *doxa* (cf. Berking 2012) – because it can be found in most other milieus too. Nairobi is the place where people from all over Kenya and East Africa come to get rich or to study. This observation corresponds with the perception of many inhabitants of Nairobi and Mombasa that life in Nairobi is much faster and not as relaxed as in Mombasa. Similarly, the competitive character can be seen on the level of churches in Nairobi which are often much bigger than in Mombasa and which compete – much more than in Mombasa – for members with different programs, events and the promise of a better life. While the change from one church to another happens in other cities too, it seems to be more common in Nairobi. Many churches do not only provide spiritual support but a life plan for social advancement, especially Pentecostal churches (for Pentecostalism in Nairobi see Droz 2012). While Pentecostals do not always succeed to improve economically, it is expected to demonstrate mundane success with good looks, extremely expensive clothes, good cars and huge donations. In a number of churches, the demonstration of social success can even overcome moral boundaries of sexual restrictions: some young women wear short skirts to show God's grace by their attractive appearance – a proof to be chosen which is a taboo in other churches. In this case, the success orientation has become so strong that it is more important than the rejection of sexuality. These churches are a paradigmatic mixture of religion and striving for success that is bound to Nairobi: it is part of Nairobi's city culture to

demonstrate status through good looks, exclusive clothing and conspicuous consumption. There are several churches in Nairobi whose Sunday services are known as catwalks with a spiritual background. Also, this ritual of showing one's wealth is a display of power and confidence that matches the good position of Christians in Kenya's capital. Correspondingly, many churches in Nairobi expect high donations from their members. Again, Mombasa is a good point of comparison because clothes do not have the function to mark social differences in a similar way as in Nairobi. And often church communities do not feel as secure as their counterparts in Nairobi. Many churches feel threatened by the Muslim spiritual influences and by Islamist terrorism. In 2014, there were attacks by Al Shabaab on Christian churches in Mombasa and these incidents produced considerable uneasiness among Christians. Also, witchcraft has been mentioned in interviews in Mombasa more frequently and with more emphasis than in Nairobi, indicating that it is a much greater concern among people in the coastal city.

Another aspect of Nairobi's city culture is that different areas of life are close or overlap. Interviewees in Nairobi were often part of business networks or social activities which make it hard to follow rigid interpretations of religious life. A good example is J., a very religious 24-year-old student who earns some money as a professional background singer. In the interview, she mentions that on many occasions the music business is strongly related to sex:

"Yeah, it's the popular music in Kenya is about that. Basically like (...), it's about party life and women, and all those things. (...) Yeah, 'cause you know being like a background vocalist, for some people they want to dictate what you'll wear, they want to dictate how you should dance on stage, they can even push you to dance with someone. I have seen it happening in concerts. (...) And that for me is something I really didn't look forward to being or doing, cause I really – first impressions are everything. Yeah. So, I may, today you're maybe somebody's background vocalist, but tomorrow you may want a job in a good organisation. And maybe somebody saw you dancing in a, in an otherwise, not so proper manner with someone. And this happens to be a director of a company and he'd have problems hiring you. 'Cause he feels like you would change the company's imagination." (Interview J., 13/09/2013)

In spite of being strongly opposed to party life and promiscuity, J. cannot always avoid places or situations where she meets people who party and drink alcohol, or who try to talk women into participation in sexual activities. Here, in this quote, J. thoroughly distances herself from involvement in such activities and not only for moral reasons. Beyond moral concerns, she is also concerned about her reputation as a respectable woman who does not want to have difficulties in future business activities. J.'s double distinction shows the typical difficulties of *Christian Religious* in Nairobi: on the one hand, religious convictions are very important and are even carried out by her in public, as J. mentions in another part of the interview. On the other hand, however, there are the business activities and social interactions which bring members of the religious milieu into situations where alcohol and sex can become dominant. According to J., she and her last boyfriend split up because both were active in the music scene and he changed his lifestyle and future plans: After spending more time with hedonistic musicians, he decided to give up on the agreement with J. not to have pre-marital sex and to develop long-term business plans. The proximity of the music

scene and the Christian milieu is typical for Nairobi. In Mombasa, the situation seems to be different, in spite of widespread prostitution: club life and 'twilight zones' for prostitution are separated spatially and socially much more from other areas of life – in particular from Christian groups – than in Nairobi.

The combination of economic and religious activities of the *Christian Religious*, the competitiveness of the churches and the importance of status related activities through clothing or donations to the church community are specific for Nairobi. These are typical values and practices which do not exist in the same intensity in other Kenyan cities. Additionally, the overlapping of interactions in spiritual spaces and much more profane areas seems to be characteristic of the city as well. Consequently, members of the *Christian* milieu must find a way to get along in Nairobi, and must make coping with these conditions their second nature. This is how local conditions find their way as adapted habits into the practices of the *Christian Religious*.

## 9 Example II: Nairobi *Young Professionals*

The *Young Professionals* are a milieu of urbanized individuals between 20 and 35 years with a good education. Many of them have grown up in 'middle class' families in Nairobi (cf. Spronk 2012). Nevertheless, there are members of this milieu from both rural areas and other cities who migrated to Nairobi and who were successful in business or as employees of companies. The "*Young Nairobi Professionals*" (Spronk 2009: 501; emphasis mine, F.S.) are economically and culturally far away from Nairobi's poor majority. The Nairobi yuppie lifestyle includes forms of conspicuous consumption, involving flashy clothes, the newest electronic gadgets (such as the latest phones), and partying in 'cool' clubs and bars. *Young Professionals* are often self-employed or work in globally operating firms or institutions like Non-Government Organizations, such as the UN or Multinational Companies. Members of this milieu are linked to the international part of Nairobi as East Africa's regional hub. Part of this world are the international banks, companies, nongovernment organizations and hotel chains which can be found in Nairobi. The *Young Professionals*, their lifestyle and typical practices are bound to this side of Nairobi: For being a member of this milieu, it is necessary that the 'hip' and vibrant Nairobi becomes one's second nature.

In their leisure time, *Young Professionals* go to clubs, restaurants and other specific places in the city center or districts like Westlands or Kilimani. Furthermore, important events for this group include the monthly 'Blankets and Wine' Festival, the 'Koroga' Festival, the Nairobi fashion market and shiny parties or cultural events. Conspicuous consumption is an essential part of this milieu's everyday life. *Young Professionals* like to have the latest iPhone, designer clothes, and other material signs of affluence. If they can afford it, they will buy European cars. Their role models are successful business people and celebrities. Members of this milieu usually have a weaker affiliation to the countryside and their extended families than members of most other milieus. A considerable number of them try to distance themselves from their extended families to escape financial obligations for support of relatives. This way they distance themselves from the moral

economy of mutual sharing in rural villages and become part of a more individualized capitalist market economy. *Young Professionals* can be religious, but they do not dedicate their lives to church-related activities as the *Christian Religious*. Rather, religion is just one part of their life, and many of them visit those churches which are prestigious meeting points for ambitious and cool young Nairobians.

In no other Kenyan city one can find a milieu of *Young Professionals* of a similar size. This milieu is bound to Nairobi because the well-paid jobs in international companies and Non-Government Organizations are unique to that city, as is its specific local culture with its club scene and vibrant nightlife. Style and looks are meaningful for members of this milieu. They can be considered as the spearheading group of Nairobi's specific form of boundary making by appearance: For being 'hip' in Nairobi, it is not enough to merely have money for the latest style and mobile phone. It is crucial in this environment to know also what to wear, how, when and where to wear it. In addition, the well paid jobs – and their good social backgrounds – give the *Young Professionals* economic opportunities and tastes which most other young inhabitants of Nairobi do not have. All these aspects produce economic and cultural symbolic boundaries (cf. Lamont 1992: 4). Therefore, there are economic and cultural hurdles for gaining access to this milieu for migrants from rural places and Nairobi's poor.

Rachel Spronk (2012) has written a comprehensive study of the members of this milieu and their sex life. According to Spronk, the rise of the *Young Professionals* is connected to economic growth and the new job opportunities that have been created since around the year 2000. Also, she shows how the young Nairobians develop and maintain their gender specific identities by going to announced places and by having certain types of relationships, including those that enable casual sex. In spite of possible conflicts with social conventions, sex has for many yuppies an important psychological and social function:

“Sex, which is central to self-expression, is somehow associated with ‘being modern’, while at the same time it feels ‘natural’. In their self-expression, their notions of self are ‘African’, ‘non-Western’, ‘non-traditional’” (Spronk 2012: 14).

This quote takes sex as the entry point to understanding both individual and group-related aspects in the rapidly changing environment of Kenya's capital Nairobi.

Z., a 31 year old owner of a small travel booking company, has moved from Mombasa to Nairobi for better business opportunities. She has several additional sources of income such as selling beauty products and consulting for companies which allow her to have a decent life with financial means for consumption. Accordingly, she has worked hard to become a successful businesswoman and consultant. In the interview, she discusses why she is hesitant to marry. While most women that the author has interviewed in Nairobi and Mombasa, receive a lot of pressure from families and the public opinion to marry early, it is a personal decision for Z.:

“I think marriage is a big, is a big deal. This is deciding that you gonna be with someone for the rest of your life, and I do not want to, because I prepared myself for the past

years to build myself and that I get to understand life more and men and (...) up to what end I can pull myself to, push myself to. So if I get to that point, I want it to be once, and I want it to be done right, cause I want to be neat forever. Yeah. So I think I will be mature enough by then I will be 32.” (Interview Z., 17/09/13)

Z. points at the nearer future and develops the idea of a possible marriage one year after the interview. This marriage was, however, even two years after the interview, not in sight. For this reason, it is more interesting to consider her life situation and relationship status during the interview in 2013. Even though she does not say so, she has, according to her friends, successive and sometimes multiple partners. These friends think that she will not marry soon and that she is quite happy with her life: Z. has, after all, a good income in Nairobi where she lives as an independent woman, far away from her family. Probably, she hides her stable financial situation to avoid demands from her relatives. For instance, she has no car and stays in a simple apartment without a fridge, definitely not due to limited financial possibilities. Instead, she prefers traveling and has traveled to several European countries. Like other *Young Professionals* who migrated from the countryside to Nairobi, Z. must protect herself from receivables of her family to keep her business alive and to finance her consumption oriented lifestyle with partying, travels and new clothes. In the long run, it is crucial for many *Young Professionals* to distance themselves from their relatives in rural places to have the financial means for surviving in Nairobi’s ambitious business environment and for participating in the hedonistic scene of the city. Someone who does not cut or at least loosen ties to the extended family may hardly have the money for expensive clothes and for drinking in clubs. Even these habits are part of making Nairobi a *Young Professionals’* second nature by an adaption to local practices and values.

## 10 Conclusion

This text has been searching for a way to study local particularities of Nairobi, with middle-income milieus and their embeddedness into the city’s particularities as empirical focus. Milieus, their specific practices and values are not universal and depend strongly on the characteristics of a place. The milieus’ internal constitutions are highly localized, and they are outcomes of particular urban environments. The differentiation of ‘middle class’ milieus in Nairobi has shown several ways in which socio-cultural groups are embedded in this local context: The city’s economic, spatial and symbolic structures have – in several ways – a constitutive impact on milieus and their practices. A study of milieus must consider the features of a city and cannot be boiled down to a universal model for other Kenyan and African cities, as the empirical part demonstrates: The milieu of the *Young Professionals* can only be found in Nairobi as the well paid jobs and career opportunities provided by start-up companies, non-government-organizations, and international corporations are limited to Kenya’s capital. Also, the vibrant night life and the young party culture are exclusive to Nairobi. Therefore, *Young Professionals* exist as a clearly identifiable milieu only in Nairobi and cannot be found in a comparative size in Mombasa, Kisumu or Eldoret.

The milieu of dedicated *Christians*, however, is not limited to Nairobi and it exists as a group of a

relevant size also in other Kenyan cities. Nevertheless, the characteristics of this milieu in Nairobi differ clearly from the features of the milieu in other cities: There is a higher degree of competition between churches in Nairobi than in Mombasa that mirrors the stronger career ambitions of many of Nairobi's inhabitants. Churches in Nairobi offer life plans for their members which are based on the promise of economic improvement and personal development. According to results from empirical research, it seems to be more common to change one's church affiliation in Nairobi than in Mombasa. Additionally, there are more Pentecostal churches of a new kind in Nairobi which combine an intense spirituality with a very strong idea of prosperity. In these churches members show the favor of God through costly forms of demonstrative consumption and donations to their congregation. In contrast, field research has shown that Christian churches in Mombasa are smaller, compete less among each other and their members are less focused on economic improvement. The display of status-symbols is less important and, additionally, dedicated *Christians* have frequently mentioned during interviews the strong Muslim influences in coastal Mombasa that do not exist in Nairobi.

The two empirical examples illustrate how 'middle class' milieus live in Nairobi and how their lifestyles are connected to the city. This article develops the argument that socio-cultural differentiation of milieus must be considered in the specific local context of a place in order to understand the group structures complete. From the perspective of urban studies, the aim of the article was to demonstrate that milieu structures are embedded into specific local economic, political and meaning structures. Whereas it is not possible to describe all crucial aspects of the distinctiveness of Nairobi, the two milieus of the *Christian Religious* and the *Young Professionals* demonstrate as exemplary cases that relations to Nairobi's specific character can provide to the understanding of sociocultural differentiation: Many *Christian Religious* have specific adaptations to Nairobi's city culture in their lifestyle, for instance a stronger orientation towards professional success and a higher importance of clothing than their counterparts in other Kenyan cities. While the specific values and practices of this Christian milieu are local adaptations, the *Young Professionals* cannot be found as milieu in other Kenyan cities because their jobs and meeting places do not exist out of Nairobi. Therefore, the milieu of the *Young Professionals* must be considered as a product of Nairobi. An interpretation with the approach of the distinctiveness of cities shows that both milieus are carriers of the specific local culture of this city: All aspects mentioned can be linked to Nairobi as Kenya's capital with a competitive economy and an high status orientations. Further research in Nairobi will provide a more comprehensive picture of the local meaning structures. In a next step, comparative research may demonstrate to which degree lifestyles of milieus can be brought together with other areas of Nairobi's city culture: Comparisons with milieus in other East African cities of comparable size like Nairobi such as Dar es Salaam or Kampala may bring more information about sociocultural differentiation, lifestyles and societal impacts on milieus in relation to the distinctiveness of each city.

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# Apprentissage et Pratiques de Citadinité et de Translocalité dans les *Beauty Salons* d'Addis Abeba

Delia Nicoué

## 1 Introduction

Les espaces urbains et les phénomènes de la vie urbaine sur le continent africain sont devenus un axe essentiel de la recherche en anthropologie. Des études anthropologiques sur les phénomènes sociaux urbains en Afrique datent selon Werthmann (2014) des années 1930, bien avant les recherches conduites par le Rhodes Livingstone Institutes (RLI), qui sont communément citées comme les pionniers de la recherche sur les phénomènes urbains en Afrique (Werthmann 2014: 162, 173). Les villes qui ont émergé du processus d'industrialisation et de modernisation dans la *Copperbelt* et certaines villes de l'Afrique occidentales telles que Ouagadougou, Lagos et Freetown ont fait l'objet de différentes recherches anthropologiques et sociologiques. Ces études ont été menées notamment pour cerner les conséquences sociales de la migration pour le travail, et pour comprendre les problèmes relatifs à l'ethnicité, au tribalisme et aux nouvelles formes d'organisation sociales en milieu urbain (Hahn 2010: 116; Werthmann 2014: 163, 166, 169). En outre, ces études se sont également intéressées aux expériences individuelles dans l'appropriation d'objets, de biens de consommation, de modes et de formes de vie moderne en milieu urbain africain (Hahn 2010: 116).

Il faut noter aussi que certaines études anthropologiques et sociologiques sur les milieux de vie urbains en Afrique ont tenté de clarifier un sujet central, notamment que la vie urbaine en Afrique n'est pas uniquement une scène de reproduction de pratiques traditionnelles tribales importées des zones rurales. Mais plutôt, ces villes et zones urbaines sont décrites comme des espaces sociaux de créativité et d'invention de nouvelles formes culturelles (Cohen 1969, Mitchell 1956). Pourtant, si ces nouveaux centres urbains qui ont émergé dans différentes régions de l'Afrique sont perçus et analysés comme des lieux où se développe une dynamique de créativité culturelle et de production d'arts et de mode, le regard porté sur ces villes est aussi fortement dominé par la recherche des anomalies, des crises et des pathologies – au sein des sociétés urbaines et dans la structure d'organisation de l'espace elle-même (cf. entre autres: Abebe 2008; Bähre 2000, 2007; Bethlehem 2005; Cooper 1983; Davis 2006; De Boeck / Plissart 2004; Le Marcis 2004; Mbembe / Nuttall 2004; Murray / Myers 2006; Philipps 2013; Place 2004; Simone / Abouhany 2005)

Dans une autre perspective sur l'espace urbain africain apparaissent des sujets tels que la création et la négociation de l'espace par des catégories de genres, de classes d'âge et de couches sociales. Ces études tentent de mettre en lumière certaines dynamiques et pratiques d'exclusion, mais aussi d'appropriation de l'espace urbain par des groupes sociaux tels que les femmes (Fuest 1996; Pellow 2003; Werthmann 1997), les personnes âgées (Gerold 2013), les enfants (Abebe 2008), sans oublier les classes et les milieux sociaux urbains de même que les catégories d'identité sexuelle (Gandoulou / Balandier 1989; Hahn / Kastner 2012; Treiber 2005; Tucker 2009).

Si les villes africaines peuvent être perçues comme des scènes de production sociale et de création de nouvelles expressions culturelles de la vie citadine moderne, la culture de la modernité devient également synonyme de la culture de la métropole (Mbembe / Nuttall 2004: 361). C'est ainsi que dans le contexte éthiopien, la métropole est cet espace qui symbolise la manifestation de modernité et donc le lieu où les Éthiopiens des zones rurales espèrent trouver des moyens pour réaliser leurs rêves d'une meilleure vie (Werthmann 2014: 161).

Pour mieux saisir le foisonnement des expressions culturelles de la modernité du milieu urbain africain, Hahn propose d'adopter une perspective de mobilité et d'examiner non seulement les mouvements de personnes des zones rurales vers les villes, mais aussi les mouvements entre régions urbaines, de même que ceux transfrontaliers, car l'expérience et l'aspiration à la mobilité sont des réalités constitutives du monde de vie quotidien (*Life-Worlds*) des citoyens africains (Hahn 2010: 117f). De ce fait, les villes africaines apparaissent comme des lieux et une étape intermédiaires et transitoires dans la mobilité entre une zone rurale, une ville secondaire et le reste du monde (Hahn 2010: 119). Les paradigmes de mobilité et de déterritorialisation sont alors deux concepts clés qui ouvrent une perspective d'analyse des dynamiques sociales et culturelles dans les villes d'Afrique. Ces paradigmes permettent de rendre compte des mondes d'expériences situables dans un contexte social dans lequel les dynamiques culturelles de la vie quotidienne se définissent non par rapport aux pratiques quotidiennes typiquement locales, mais plutôt par rapport aux repères et aux interconnexions au niveau mondial qui influencent le quotidien des habitants de la ville partout ailleurs dans le monde et en particulier dans les villes en Afrique. Une possibilité de conceptualiser la spécificité de la vie urbaine en Afrique sera donc de prendre en compte les réseaux d'activités, de communication, et de circulation de biens et d'idées entre les habitants de la ville et le reste du monde. Ici, l'exemple d'Addis Abeba permet de comprendre l'importance de la manifestation de ces interconnexions et influences mondiales sur le quotidien au niveau local. Cette ville, qui, perchée sur des collines à une hauteur de 2300 mètres d'altitude à la corne de l'Afrique, est devenue une métropole, le nexus du transfert et de circulation du capital, des biens et des personnes (cf. Simmel 2005).

On peut donc situer le quotidien des citoyens dans la ville Addis Abeba en portant le regard vers les individus en mouvement entre l'Éthiopie et le reste du monde, qui contribuent à l'image spécifique d'Addis Abeba comme une ville-monde, un lieu d'attraction et de transit de flux de migrations internes de personnes qui cherchent des opportunités de se rendre dans les pays riches du Golfe, en Europe, aux États-Unis ou au Canada. L'effet d'attraction et la fonction de transit est afférant au caractère même de la ville-monde, qui est perçue comme la manifestation de la

modernité qui promet l'accomplissement du désir existentiel d'une vie meilleure. Addis Abeba apparaît par conséquent comme un tremplin vers d'autres régions du monde ("*stepping stone*", Bakewell / Jónsson 2011; Sinatti 2008), non seulement pour les Éthiopiens en provenance d'autres régions du pays mais aussi pour les ressortissants et surtout les réfugiés venant des pays limitrophes. Mais elle est aussi le lieu vers où convergent des flux de ressortissants venant d'autres pays d'Afrique et du monde entier, à l'exemple des expatriés qui travaillent dans les nombreux institutions et organisations internationales comme l'Union Africaine, la délégation de l'Union Européenne et entre autres, la Commission Économique pour l'Afrique (CEA) qui est un organisme régional de l'Organisation des Nations Unies (ONU).

Ainsi, pour comprendre la spécificité de la citadinité telle que vécue et pratiquée à Addis Abeba, il paraît important de prendre en compte la situation, le rôle et l'emplacement symbolique de cette ville comme le carrefour des flux translocaux et transnationaux qui empreint son image et nourrit les dynamiques de la vie sociale, moteurs de son développement et expansion. Ce faisant, l'État éthiopien et les urbanistes qui planifient et réalisent les infrastructures de cette ville, mais aussi et en particulier les citoyens qui sont pris dans l'expérience et dans l'aspiration à la mobilité en dehors du pays sont les acteurs sur lesquels peuvent se porter le regard ethnographique dans la recherche en anthropologie urbaine sur les villes éthiopiennes. Être mobile et être capable de démontrer un habitus cosmopolite font non seulement partie de la biographie de nombres de citoyens de la ville, mais ce sont aussi des exigences et pressions sociales que subissent les citoyens et en particulier ceux d'Addis Abeba.

Dès lors que les *Beauty Salons* ('BS')<sup>1</sup> sont une institution typique de la vie urbaine en Éthiopie, ils constituent des espaces où se communiquent et se fabriquent des imaginaires d'une vie de citoyens cosmopolites. Le présent article s'inscrit donc dans cette approche de mobilité et de translocalité pour mettre en lumière l'expérience et l'aspiration à la mobilité de jeunes femmes migrantes au conditionnel ("*would-be migrants*") cf. Xiang 2014) qui fréquentent et travaillent dans les salons de coiffure de la ville. Pour celles qui viennent des zones rurales et sont en transit dans la ville pour préparer leur départ pour le Moyen-Orient, les salons de coiffure sont de potentiels recruteurs de main d'œuvre (voir aussi: Liebelt 2015: 12). Cette perspective permet de faire valoir un aspect essentiel de la vie en milieu urbain dans le présent sur le continent africain. Pour ce, il est nécessaire d'examiner l'évolution et la spécificité de l'espace urbain d'Addis Abeba qui a suivi un développement distinct de la plupart des grandes villes sur le continent africain.

## 2 Addis Abeba, la 'Nouvelle Fleur'<sup>2</sup> cosmopolite

La structure polycentrique d'Addis Abeba est un trait caractéristique de cet espace urbain fondée

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<sup>1</sup> Beauty Salon 'BS' est le terme qui figure communément sur les enseignes des salons de coiffure et de beauté de la ville. Sur les enseignes de ces établissements se retrouvent parfois le terme "spa" qui vient compléter les prestations offertes à une clientèle des deux sexes. Notons qu'en général ces établissements qui portent la désignation 'BS' sont en premier lieu des salons de coiffure et de soins manucures et pédicures.

<sup>2</sup> Le nom Addis Abeba, qui signifie en Amharique 'nouvelle fleur' fut donné à la ville à sa fondation par Tahitu, l'épouse

en 1886, au cœur d'un empire en pleine expansion sous l'empereur Menelik II (Zewde 2005: 122f). Addis Abeba montre, plus de deux siècles après sa fondation, un profil révélateur de l'œuvre (Lefebvre 1991) successif d'une forte politique de développement urbain autochtone qui a été modernisée par différents schémas directeurs qui portent également des empreintes du temps de l'occupation italienne de courte durée (Dolumbia 2013: 21-25; Giorghis 2010a: 52; Zewde 2005: 129).

La métropole Addis Abeba est l'œuvre et le «produit des structures sociales» (Löw 2008) qui abritent une population d'environ quatre millions d'habitants (sur un total de 94 Millions dans le pays) (Banque Mondiale 2014). Addis Abeba s'est constituée sous l'influence d'un intérêt autochtone autour d'infrastructures politiques et religieuses comme le *gebbi* (palais) et les églises orthodoxes, de même qu'autour des centres urbains tels que les marchés *arada* et *mercato* (Zewde 2005: 123-130). Le trait cosmopolite propre à la ville depuis sa fondation au 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle lui a valu la dénomination "the Paris of Abyssinia", un nom que des voyageurs français du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle lui ont attribué (Zewde 2005: 121).

Aujourd'hui, en tant que capitale d'un pays occupant le 173<sup>ème</sup> rang (UNDP 2014) sur l'échelle des indicateurs de développement humain (HDI), Addis Abeba est pourtant devenue au fil du temps non seulement le siège de l'industrie et des services centralisés dans la capitale, mais aussi la niche de l'industrie de la mode qui devient un élément de distinction dont se sert le pays sur la scène internationale. C'est la dynamique de la production locale de textile en coton et en laine traditionnelle, de même que le développement d'une industrie de production de cuir, de textile et de vêtements pour de grands investisseurs venant surtout du Canada, de l'Inde, du Japon et de la Turquie (United States International Trade Commission 2009) qui la distinguent de ces voisins africains. Les salaires très bas qui prévalent dans le pays sont l'un des facteurs décisifs qui font de l'Éthiopie une destination attrayante comme site de production pour les multinationales de la production manufacturière.

Il faut toutefois admettre qu'Addis Abeba n'est pas seulement un site de production de vêtements destinés à l'export. Elle cherche aussi à marquer sa présence sur la scène de la mode à l'échelle internationale. C'est ce qu'indique le titre d'un magazine hebdomadaire de la CNN pour présenter le *Fashion Week* d'Addis Abeba: "Paris, London, Addis Ababa? Ethiopia's future is fashion forward"<sup>3</sup>. Cet évènement signale les velléités des créateurs de mode de la périphérie du système-monde à porter leurs talents et leurs productions vers les centres de la mode pour défiler à la même hauteur que des créateurs de renommée internationale. L'aspiration d'Addis Abeba d'intégrer le rang des capitales mondiales de la mode, révèle par ailleurs les ambitions d'un pays désireux de s'aligner dans le rang des pays développés ou de faire du moins partie des pays à revenus intermédiaires. L'Éthiopie tente d'atteindre cet objectif par un taux de croissance d'environ 7% pour les années 2012 et 2013 (Abbink 2012: 331, 2013: 326). En effet, ce taux de

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de Menelik II (cf. Zewde 2005: 122).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. URL: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/01/africa/paris-london-addis-ababa-ethiopia-future-is-fashion-forward/>, vérifié en septembre 2016

croissance élevée qui distingue l'Éthiopie des tendances des pays africains avoisinants est surtout favorisé par une étroite coopération avec des pays comme la Chine, l'Inde, le Brésil, la Turquie et de l'Arabie Saoudite devenus les plus grands investisseurs économiques actifs dans le secteur industriel, agricole et surtout dans la construction d'infrastructures<sup>4</sup> (Abbink 2013: 327).

L'analyse des pratiques sociales quotidiennes, des représentations et de la perception du monde chez les habitants de la ville d'Addis Abeba, et dans le cas échéant chez les jeunes femmes aspirantes à la migration doit nécessairement prendre en compte les principaux facteurs qui produisent l'espace et la réalité sociale quotidienne dans la métropole. Ces facteurs peuvent être identifiés comme étant les stratégies de développement économique de même que les politiques d'urbanisation axées sur le modèle des pays asiatiques. Il est donc nécessaire de souligner les politiques de l'actuel régime autoritaire en place depuis 1991 (Abbink 2006), et les impacts de ces politiques de développement sur la vie quotidienne des citoyens.

### 3 Citadinité dans une atmosphère de translocalité

Il existe en français deux notions pour désigner le caractère de ce qui est propre à la vie en milieu urbain: Ce sont les notions de citadinité et d'urbanité, deux termes qui ne sont pas interchangeables. Si les deux termes sont liés au caractère de ce qui se rapporte à la ville, la notion d'urbanité se rapporte plutôt à la civilité et aux formes de politesse qui font partie des traits du caractère de l'habitant de la ville, tandis que le mot citadinité renvoie aux pratiques et aux représentations des individus et des groupes, appréhendés comme des acteurs sociaux dans la ville (Berry-Chikhaoui 2009). Le terme citadinité révèle donc la relation de conditionnement et d'interdépendance entre les individus et la ville, souvent associée en Afrique aux agréments et aux commodités de la civilisation moderne, de telle sorte que le mode de vie dans les zones rurales est en conséquence perçu comme opposé au mode de vie urbain et donc à la modernité (Werthmann 2014).

Pour mieux comprendre cette opposition structurelle entre les deux milieux de vie dans le cas précis de l'Éthiopie, il est toutefois nécessaire d'examiner l'influence qu'exerce le gouvernement éthiopien sur les dynamiques de développement de la ville Addis Abeba. Dans ce sens, la «fièvre de Dubaï» (Stoll 2010) diagnostiquée comme trait caractéristique de l'urbanisation en Éthiopie, permet de faire ressortir cette volonté politique d'alignement aux modèles de développement des pays asiatiques. Par conséquent, l'"espace dominant" (Lefebvre, cité chez Löw 2001: 52) de la ville d'Addis Abeba, cet espace conçu par des architectes, urbanistes, décideurs éthiopiens, est aussi bien un enjeu que le produit de la détermination politique de faire d'Addis Abeba une tour de contrôle du pouvoir politique et économique, et le cheval de bataille du grand projet de

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<sup>4</sup> L'investissement dans la construction d'infrastructures a considérablement contribué à transformer la physionomie de la ville, qui vient d'inaugurer le *Addis Ababa Light Railway*, le premier véhicule de transport ferroviaire urbain en Afrique subsaharienne. Cf. URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/sep/22/new-tram-chinese-addis-ababa-ethiopia-uk-councils>, vérifié en septembre 2016

modernisation de l'État développementaliste éthiopien<sup>5</sup> (Scott 1999, Zenawi 2006). Ce projet s'accompagne d'une volonté ferme de renforcement du statut prestigieux d'Addis Abeba pour en faire une métropole et une capitale continentale, où siègent l'Union Africaine et la représentation de plusieurs organisations et institutions internationales et des organisations non gouvernementales (ONG). Aussi, Addis-Abeba est-elle l'une des villes qui comptent le plus de diplomates au monde derrière New York et Genève (Boisselet 2013). Tandis que les salaires des employés expatriés sont dits être dans l'ordre de 4600 et 11500 euros par mois (Boisselet 2013), les salaires ordinaires en vigueur pour les employés locaux tournent autour de 30-50\$<sup>6</sup> (Beaugé 2014). Ainsi la présence de cette communauté d'expatriés n'est pas sans effets sur la société éthiopienne qui vit cette inégalité au quotidien, perceptible surtout à travers la baisse du pouvoir d'achat, la montée du prix des logements et du coût de la vie<sup>7</sup>. En tout, remarquons donc que c'est cet "espace dominant" qui est la force affectant la perception de la réalité et les pratiques sociales quotidiennes de ses habitants par le conditionnement de leur routine, de leur perception de la réalité et de leur imaginaire social ainsi que de leur projet de vie.

C'est en examinant la perception de l'espace urbain et l'effet produit sur ses habitants que je considère le concept d'"atmosphère" (voir aussi Rieß dans ce volume) de citoyenneté et de translocalité comme instrument d'approche dans l'analyse des 'BS' d'Addis Abeba. Selon Löw, le terme "atmosphère" peut se définir comme étant:

"[...] the external effect of social goods and human beings realized perceptually in their spatial ordering. This means that atmospheres arise through the perception of interactions between people and/or from the external effect of social goods in their arrangement" (Löw 2008: 44).

Cette notion permet de repérer et de comprendre la signification de ces espaces de la vie quotidienne par l'effet produit par les objets et les personnes dans un cadre spécifique du milieu urbain africain. On ne peut donc analyser la qualité atmosphérique des salons de beauté et ignorer leurs effets évocateurs d'une meilleure vie, de même que les divers effets subtils d'inclusion et d'exclusion sociale en considérant le type de clientèle et l'accessibilité aux biens de consommation en vente dans ces lieux (produits cosmétiques, vêtements et divers accessoires pour la mode au féminin). Ce concept de la sociologie urbaine peut donc servir d'instrument théorique d'approche

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<sup>5</sup> L'approche verticale du cours de modernisation d'Addis Abeba ne manque pas de provoquer des soulèvements des populations touchées par des mesures de relocation ou d'expropriation des terres pour le grand projet de développement. Le soulèvement des citoyens dits Oromo au cours du mois de décembre 2015 est un cas récent du drame qui se joue entre le gouvernement et les populations lésées par les projets de croissance et de modernisation: cf. The Guardian: «Violent clashes in Ethiopia over 'master plan' to expand Addis», URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/11/ethiopia-protests-master-plan-addis-ababa-students>, vérifié en septembre 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Ce qui équivaut à environ 25 à 45 Euro (Taux d'échange de Septembre 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Un cas illustratif des problèmes rencontrés par les citoyens face à la montée du coût de la vie à Addis Abeba démontre l'expérience frustrante de notre assistante de recherche Hélène A. et de son époux, tous deux employés dans le secteur privé et jouissant d'un salaire assez élevé (environ 255€ pour le couple) comparé aux revenus moyens des employés éthiopiens. Leur recherche de logement en février 2012 a été source d'une série de frustrations qui a finalement abouti à la location d'un petit studio à la périphérie d'Addis Abeba.

des *Beauty salons* ('BS') d'Addis Abeba afin de mieux visualiser l'ensemble des effets produits par les biens matériels, immatériels, de même que par les humains dans cet espace spécifique de la vie urbaine.

Notons toutefois que l'idée de la mode et de l'effet produit par les vêtements et le port de cheveux est un élément indissociable du sens commun chez les jeunes citadins d'Addis Abeba, conscients de l'effet classificateur et structurant de leurs vêtements et en particulier de la coiffure dans la réalité quotidienne (Bourdieu 1984). On ne peut donc se pencher sur la citadinité de jeunes d'Addis Abeba sans prendre en compte cette conscience de l'importance de la mode, de même que la perception émique d'une appartenance à un "cosmopolis" global (Salazar 2010), que l'ancrage du pays au carrefour des flux de circulation d'objets, d'idées et de valeurs ainsi que de personnes et de capitaux contribuent à maintenir présents.

Le terme translocalité décrit un effet et une subjectivité produits et générés dans l'acte conscient de transcender la localité, qui est elle-même le résultat d'une production collective d'un groupe social donné (Appadurai 1996). Par ailleurs, ce terme souligne tout aussi bien le caractère global des effets produits par la circulation de personnes, d'idées et de biens. La notion transnationalité, en référence au concept théorique du "transnationalisme" (Glick Schiller et al. 1997; Pries 1996) permet en outre de saisir les représentations et les pratiques qui constituent la réalité quotidienne des individus dont l'existence au quotidien en Éthiopie est conditionnée par des interactions avec leurs réseaux sociaux au-delà des frontières éthiopiennes.

Par conséquent, le pouvoir structurant de l'atmosphère de translocalité qui émane de l'espace métropolitain d'Addis Abeba et en particulier des 'BS' peut ainsi être conçu comme l'un des déterminants et la source d'aspiration dans la formulation des projets de migration de jeunes femmes qui étaient au centre de la recherche sur la migration vers le Moyen-Orient.

#### 4 Méthodes et approche du terrain de recherche

Cet article est basé sur une vignette illustrative réalisée à Addis Abeba dans le cadre de la recherche sur les mondes de vie sociaux (*Lebenswelt*, Cf. Schütz / Luckmann 1979) de jeunes migrantes au conditionnel "would-be migrants" (Xiang 2014) et des candidates<sup>8</sup> à la migration.

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<sup>8</sup> Les candidates à la migration pour le travail de servante au Moyen-Orient sont celles qui sont présentes sur les sites identifiés dans le couloir administratif composé de stations distinctes telles que: le département d'immigration (Main Department of Immigration and Nationality Affairs, où se fait la demande et le retrait du passeport), le ministère du travail (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, MOLSA, en charge de la validation du contrat de travail), le ministère des affaires étrangères (*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, MFA, où se font le prélèvement des empreintes digitales et l'enregistrement comme citoyens éthiopiens à l'étranger), le centre médical de Kazanchis (où s'effectuent les tests de contrôle d'éventuelles maladies contagieuses ou les tests d'une éventuelle grossesse). D'autres centres comme les bureaux de traduction et les entreprises d'assurances situés à La Gare viennent compléter ce couloir administratif où on retrouve les candidates qui se communiquent entre elles diverses informations et rumeurs.

Le séjour sur le terrain à Addis Abeba (de janvier à mars 2012) fait partie d'une suite de recherches ethnographiques entreprises dans le cadre de la thèse de doctorat en Ethnologie intitulée *"Migration et savoirs: Reconstruction ethnographique des itinéraires et périples de l'apprentissage sur le parcours migratoire de jeunes Éthiopiennes entre l'Éthiopie et l'Allemagne"* (Nicoué forthcoming). Les recherches ont été menées à différentes étapes et stations de la migration de jeunes femmes vers le Moyen-Orient et l'Europe.

C'est donc en suivant les traces de mon assistante de recherche et de deux informatrices, Tadalesh (23 ans) et Birtukan (17 ans) dans leur quotidien de la vie urbaine à Addis Abeba, entre autres vers leurs lieux de résidence, de travail et de loisirs, que j'ai découvert les salons suivants : *Fana Beauty Salon* sur la prestigieuse avenue Bole Road et un deuxième salon situé dans un quartier populaire de Sidist Kilo. Même si les soins dans ce salon ne sont pas à la portée de la bourse de mes informatrices, *Fana Beauty Salon* m'a été présenté comme un salon, que moi, en tant que chercheuse intéressée aux styles de vie des femmes à Addis Abeba, devrais nécessairement fréquenter<sup>9</sup>. La coiffure étant un élément constitutif de l'identité et de l'appartenance à une classe sociale spécifique dans la vie quotidienne des jeunes citadines, les salons de coiffure se sont révélés être des espaces régulièrement fréquentés par certaines informatrices, citadines de longue date, à l'opposé de celles dont la présence dans la capitale est plus récente et qui n'ont pas les moyens financiers de pouvoir s'offrir des soins dans un salon de coiffure.

L'approche du quotidien dans ces 'BS' a été faite en se basant surtout sur l'observation participante en compagnie des informatrices, surtout de Tadalesh qui se rendait deux fois par semaines au salon de coiffure, seules ou en compagnie de sa jeune sœur Lilly pour se coiffer et se faire des soins manucures et pédicures. Par ailleurs, j'avais éprouvé moi-même, étant de la même classe d'âge que certaines de mes informatrices, la nécessité de visites régulières des salons de coiffure de la ville dans l'objectif d'une bonne gestion des impressions données par le chercheur sur le terrain. Cela dans le but de me conformer aux normes et aux attentes de mes interlocutrices dont l'imaginaire est fortement empreint des styles de vêtement et de coiffure importés par les migrants de retour et de même par les images véhiculées dans les médias nationaux et internationaux disponibles dans la capitale. C'est en ayant ainsi pris conscience de la signification primordiale de l'allure du chercheur, de sa prestance mais aussi et surtout de sa classe sociale perceptible à travers le type de coiffure et de vêtements portés, que j'ai décidé, en tant qu'étudiante d'origine non occidentale et non "habesha"<sup>10</sup> mais "africaine", de me conformer aux attentes et aux valeurs de mon entourage sur le terrain de recherche.

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<sup>9</sup> Je me suis rendue dans ce salon pour me faire coiffer en compagnie de Tadalesh qui avait l'envie et la curiosité de mettre les pieds dans ce lieu qu'elle n'avait pas les moyens de fréquenter.

<sup>10</sup> Le terme "habesha", dérivé de Abyssinie est un terme utilisé par les Éthiopiens eux-mêmes pour s'identifier et évoquer leur descendance de l'ancien empire abyssinien.

## 5 La signification du 'BS' dans les projets d'émigration de jeunes femmes

En tant qu'institution typique centrale à la vie urbaine en Éthiopie, les salons sont les lieux où les professionnels de la coiffure et des soins corporels remplacent les tresseuses des zones rurales qui offrent communément leur service au domicile de leurs clientes. Des études anthropologiques sur la sphère de beauté et ses pratiques démontrent que celles-ci offrent une perspective enrichissante dans la conceptualisation des subjectivités et identités raciales (Liebelt 2015).

Les 'BS' se sont imposés comme un espace incontournable dans l'analyse des mondes de vie sociaux de jeunes aspirantes à la migration pour plusieurs raisons: d'un côté, ces salons sont de petites entreprises du secteur de service urbain dans lesquelles s'investissent les épargnes des migrantes de retour. Il faut surtout noter que la majorité des 'BS' d'Addis Abeba sont créés par des émigrants éthiopiens de retour des pays occidentaux, qui sont des personnes considérées comme riches, au statut social de prestige et dénommées 'diaspora', ou par ceux au statut social moins prestigieux qui n'ont pu atteindre que le Moyen-Orient.

De l'autre côté, il est à noter que l'urbanisation grandissante à Addis Abeba est allée de pair avec une demande croissante dans le secteur du service, en particulier la création des salons de soins de beauté qui absorbent une large partie de la main d'œuvre féminine peu qualifiée (Stevenson / St-Onge 2005). Les 'BS' recrutent un important contingent de jeunes femmes en provenance des zones rurales à la recherche d'opportunités de mobilité sociale dans la grande ville. Ainsi, l'engagement des femmes dans le maintien des familles ne se limite pas seulement à leur présence active dans l'agriculture de subsistance dans les zones rurales. Les villes du pays sont un pôle d'attraction significatif en particulier pour de jeunes femmes mariées de force en bas âge et qui, souvent, abandonnent leurs foyers pour chercher des opportunités de gains dans les zones urbaines (Giorghis 2010b). Les mariages précoces de petites filles âgées parfois de 7 à 12 ans et les divorces qui en résultent, réduisent leur chance de survie dans la zone rurale où elles ne peuvent plus compter sur l'aide de leurs époux (Baker 2001). Parmi ces femmes dites indépendantes, certaines retournent chez leurs parents, d'autres saisissent la possibilité de continuer leur éducation ou se rendent dans les régions urbaines pour gagner leur vie (Baker 2001: 117-120). En particulier pour ces femmes dites indépendantes, Addis Abeba est un point d'attraction significatif ( Benti 2007; Berhanu / White 2000).

Outre ces migrantes venant des zones rurales, des milliers de jeunes femmes, en majorité peu qualifiées et ne possédant pas une formation au-delà de l'éducation du primaire (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2010, UNESCO 2012), décident de faire l'apprentissage du métier de la coiffure et/ou de prendre le chemin de la migration pour le travail vers le Moyen-Orient. Au-delà du manque de moyen financier et de suivi scolaire qui favorisent le phénomène du décrochage scolaire en particulier chez les jeunes femmes, la vulnérabilité des jeunes adolescentes au harcèlement sexuel par les enseignants (masculins) et le chantage qui en résulte s'imposent aussi comme raisons non négligeables mentionnées par les interlocutrices de cette étude comme la

raison justifiant leur du décrochage scolaire. En cela, en partant de l'hypothèse que le décrochage scolaire est l'un des facteurs favorisant la décision du voyage vers le Moyen-Orient, les chiffres qui témoignent du décrochage scolaire chez les femmes, en particulier en ce qui concerne le niveau de transition du primaire au secondaire, sont des repères importants pour comprendre le phénomène de migration de masse de jeunes femmes vers le Moyen-Orient.

Retenons à ce propos que les 'BS' d'Addis Abeba sont des espaces de la vie urbaine où les interdépendances entre le local et le global sont très manifestes. Ils constituent un cadre social emblématique, une fenêtre qui s'ouvre pour la jeune apprentie ou l'ouvrière sur les commodités et sur les biens de consommation modernes qui alimentent le désir et les envies de consommation de la catégorie d'âge des femmes ciblées, que j'ai située entre 16 et 30 ans. Les 'BS' sont des lieux, *loci* où s'articulent non seulement une atmosphère de translocalité mais aussi une atmosphère de consumérisme, de la mode moderne et d'une meilleure vie. Cette potentialité d'une meilleure vie est perceptible et négociable à travers les pratiques de soins corporels et capillaires, de même qu'en interaction et communication entre les employées (ouvrières et apprenties) et les clientes de ces institutions.

Le service principal offert dans les 'BS' est la coiffure, qui est non seulement une forme mais aussi un médium de production et d'expression de la beauté et de l'état d'âme. La coiffure, traditionnellement portée en Éthiopie sous forme de tresses, constitue un médium de communication et d'action sociale pour ceux qui savent lire et interpréter sa sémantique et les codes qu'elle véhicule (Treiber / Elias, in print 2011). En Éthiopie, la coiffure se présente donc comme un canal par lequel se manifeste l'appartenance à un groupe ethnique et à une classe sociale (surtout en ce qui concerne l'état matrimonial: célibat, mariage, veuvage). Les styles mais aussi la pratique de coiffure sont sujets à d'importantes transformations tout au long de l'histoire et des échanges culturels entre la région de la corne et le reste du monde (Treiber / Elias, in print 2011). Les changements subis par les formes traditionnelles de coiffures n'ont toutefois pu altérer l'importance de ce médium de communication en particulier dans les villes éthiopiennes. Car, en tant que forme d'expression et d'action sociale, les types de coiffure et la façon de porter ses cheveux dans la métropole Addis Abeba sont souvent révélateurs de la condition sociale ou de l'appartenance ethnique de celles qui les portent. Tandis que le port d'une coiffure à la mode sur le parquet international ou d'une variante moderne des tresses traditionnelles éthiopiennes est un signe d'appartenance au monde de vie sociale citadine, le chignon de cheveux naturels non décrépés ni lissés de même que les tresses traditionnelles typiques à différentes régions du pays sont révélateurs de la condition sociale défavorisée ou de l'état d'appartenance aux marges de l'espace urbain de la métropole ou au milieu de vie rural. Cette identification des individus au milieu de vie rural de par leur habitus, style d'habillement et de coiffure est comparable à un phénomène décrit par Hilgers (2009) au Burkina Faso où le discours populaire catégorise et différencie le citadin de celui "venu directement du village" ("VDV", cf. Werthmann 2014: 168).

## 6 Des 'BS' pour toutes les classes sociales

Eu égard à l'importance de la coiffure pour la citadine éthiopienne, les salons de beauté et de coiffure bourgeonnent en grand nombre aussi bien dans les quartiers pauvres au centre et en marge de la ville, que dans les quartiers chics habités et fréquentés par de riches Éthiopiens et des expatriés. Parmi les différentes classes et catégories de salons de coiffure d'Addis Abeba, on peut compter d'une part les établissements aux enseignes modestes, fréquentés par une clientèle aux revenus modestes ayant un pouvoir d'achat très limité. Il existe d'autre part ces salons qui s'adressent à une clientèle cosmopolite et internationale et qui marquent leur présence sur la toile Internet et sur les réseaux sociaux virtuels avec à l'appui des images de jeunes femmes exhibant divers modèles de coiffure en vogue au niveau international, et des modèles de tresses locales modernisées. Ces mannequins exhibent un maquillage professionnel et des mains soigneusement manucurées. La peau claire et soignée de ces mannequins m'a été décrite par une informatrice comme un signe dénotant de la meilleure qualité de vie à l'étranger, dans les pays occidentaux où l'air ambiant et le climat sont meilleurs pour la peau en comparaison aux conditions climatiques de l'Éthiopie considérées comme néfastes pour la beauté. En outre, ces images qui font l'éloge des 'BS' sont ainsi conçues dans un design très moderne et sont par ailleurs destinées à démontrer la créativité et le talent des maîtresses de salons dévouées à un service de haute gamme. Il faut remarquer par ailleurs que les noms donnés à certains salons de cette catégorie sont plus qu'évocateurs du caractère translocal du milieu urbain éthiopien qui ne se limite pas uniquement aux enseignes de ces établissements, par exemple: *Boston Day Spa*, *Toronto Beauty Care*, *Atlanta Hair Salon And Spa*, *Terry Style + H2O* etc. sont entre autres des dénominations qui évoquent la qualité de la vie outre-mer. Ils offrent leur service à la grande communauté d'expatriés, de même qu'à une élite locale, capable de s'offrir le luxe d'embellissement et de relaxation. Les enseignes de ces salons de beauté font partie intégrante du paysage urbain de la capitale Addis Abeba à côté de restaurants comme *la Mandoline* (restaurant français), *Swedish Bar & Restaurant*, *Amsterdam Bar & Restaurant*, *New York Café & Restaurant*, qui sont des désignations de lieux à Addis Abeba qui cherchent à se positionner dans les courants de la mondialisation et du cosmopolitisme.

Ainsi cette tendance établie à évoquer des horizons lointains, où se sont établis et continuent de s'établir des milliers d'émigrants éthiopiens depuis la fin de la monarchie et le début de l'avènement de la révolution dans la moitié années 1970, est-elle une tendance d'urbanité propre à Addis Abeba. Dans cette promesse d'urbanité, on peut également discerner une évocation de la volonté d'alignement à la hauteur des capitales et des métropoles occidentales dans un pays qui, par sa position géographique à la corne de l'Afrique, se situe physiquement loin des grands centres du système-monde, mais qui tente de participer depuis sa position périphérique à la culture des villes-mondes auxquelles les propriétaires de ces institutions empruntent les noms.

C'est dans ce lieu qu'on peut observer les comportements verbalisés et non verbalisés et les formes observables de l'imaginaire translocal dans le quotidien. Dans les salons de beauté et de coiffure, l'omniprésence du fait de la migration se remarque non seulement dans les entretiens et les échanges d'informations entre employées sur les prérequis exigés par les diverses institutions

impliquées dans la coordination de la migration vers les pays du Moyen-Orient. Bien plus, l'actualité du fait de la migration dans ces espaces sociaux est également donnée par l'exemple des propriétaires des salons, en général des migrantes de retour du Liban ou de Dubaï. Car, il est vrai que les salons de coiffure sont surtout une forme de petite entreprise dans laquelle s'investissent les petits capitaux de migrantes pour le travail qui ont pu épargner pour se bâtir un futur dans leur pays d'origine, conformément au plan de développement du gouvernement qui cherche à utiliser les migrants et leurs potentiels d'investissement pour le développement du pays.

Deux 'BS', *Fana Beauty Salon* et un autre dont on n'a pu identifier le nom<sup>11</sup>, constituent des exemples spécifiques de cet espace social urbain, dont émane à différents degrés une atmosphère de citadinité et de translocalité.

*Fana Beauty salon* est un salon, qui à première vue, est surtout fréquenté par la classe moyenne supérieure et l'élite. L'enceinte occupe un immeuble situé sur l'avenue prestigieuse de la ville, le Bole Road. La façade en verre est décorée de grands posters de femmes portant des modèles de coiffure peints sur les vitrines pour garder ainsi l'intérieur du salon discrètement à l'abri de regards curieux. L'intérieur du salon occupe deux étages et est décoré de plusieurs vitrines renfermant divers types de produits cosmétiques et accessoires de beauté, ainsi que des articles vestimentaires en vente. Le salon étant vide de clients le jour de ma visite, il y avait une activité foisonnante des jeunes apprenties qui s'adonnaient à un défilé de mode en essayant différents modèles d'habits et de chaussures scintillant à hauts talons. En absence de la propriétaire du salon, le défilé de mode avec des habits moulant le corps et des mini-jupes était ponctué de séances de photographie prises avec le téléphone portable d'une des employées. Les habits qui attisaient les convoitises et les désirs de ces jeunes femmes font partie de la collection de vente qui accompagne les activités de soins de beauté du salon. À défaut de pouvoir s'offrir ces accessoires de mode, les apprenties profitent de l'absence de la propriétaire pour se mettre en scène comme l'une des clientes chics qui fréquentent le salon ou pour mimer des mannequins qui posent sur l'un des magazines de modes soigneusement rangés sur une étagère parmi lesquels on pouvait reconnaître d'anciens exemplaires de magazines tels que le "Black Beauty Magazine" et "Vogue". La télévision diffusait lors de notre visite à *Fana Beauty Salon*, la célèbre série américaine "The Prince of Bel Air" en présentant les images de la vie bourgeoise dans la grande villa de l'oncle Phil, le modèle de réussite sociale du noir américain, entouré de ses filles soigneusement habillées et coiffées. La musique et des clips vidéo américains viennent renforcer cette atmosphère plaisante d'une 'belle vie' ailleurs. Les clientes de *Fana Beauty Salon* sont celles qui viennent se faire lisser et boucler les cheveux pour une coiffure à effet chic, romantique ou dans le look retro, avec des accessoires comme les bandeaux intemporels dans lesquels s'enroulent les cheveux, tels que les portent les stars de cinéma nationaux éthiopiens ou américains, ou comme l'une des nombreuses émigrées éthiopiennes en vacances à Addis Abeba.

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<sup>11</sup> L'enseigne de ce salon portait exclusivement l'écriture amharique qu'on n'a pas pu entièrement déchiffrer lors de notre passage sur les lieux.

Ces styles de coiffure ne sont pas seulement la spécialité des coiffeuses dans les grands salons de haute gamme de la ville. Le second exemple de salon de coiffure (celui dont on n'a pu identifier le nom) se trouve dans le quartier populaire Sidist Kilo (non loin d'*Addis Regency hotel*). Il s'agit d'un salon de coiffure ordinaire dont la propriétaire est une migrante de retour du Liban. Ce petit salon de coiffure est par sa taille et son aménagement plutôt typique aux zones d'habitation des couches aux revenus modestes. Il est loin d'avoir la taille et l'arrangement chic et glamour de *Fana Beauty Salon*. Ce qui se fait également ressentir sur le prix des prestations et le confort offert. En comparaison, *Fana Beauty Salon* attire une clientèle exclusive capable de payer environ le quadruple du prix exigé dans ce salon ordinaire à la périphérie d'Addis Abeba<sup>12</sup>.

Boge, une jeune femme d'une trentaine d'années, a ouvert ce salon après son retour de Beyrouth où elle a vécu durant sept années de service en tant que domestique. Le salon se trouve dans une concession privée dont la cour arrière abrite des chambres en location. Deux jeunes filles d'un âge moyen avoisinant la vingtaine servent d'assistantes à Boge, qui est propriétaire de ce salon sans eau courante pour des clients ayant un petit budget dont les cheveux sont lavés non au champoing, mais au savon de lessive. La carence en produits modernes de traitement capillaire n'entache en rien la compétence et l'efficacité de Boge et de ses assistantes dans leurs efforts d'embellir leurs clientes avec l'un des modèles de coiffure traditionnels éthiopiens ou internationaux actuellement en vogue dans le pays. Les étagères ne sont ni huppées ni étincelantes comme dans les salons de haute gamme. Une étagère portant des produits de soins de cheveux contenait trois paquets de produits défrisant avec des images de femmes aux cheveux brillants parfaitement lissés. Pour compléter ceci, un appareil artisanal de fer à lisser les cheveux, les produits de coloration capillaire très pratiquée parmi les femmes à Addis Abeba, des vernis à ongles et quelques paquets de rajout de cheveux, constituent un inventaire assez modeste. Deux chaussures à haut talon ornés de brillants rappellent le chic arabe. Au-dessus de deux grands miroirs accrochés au mur, des posters de modèles pour des cheveux tressés sont collés sur un grand panneau. Ces images ont déjà été décolorées par le soleil, la chaleur et les produits utilisés dans cet espace confiné sur une superficie d'à peine douze mètres carrés. C'est ce salon que fréquente mon assistante Héléne A., bien rémunérée mais pourtant incapable de s'offrir des soins capillaires et d'autres traitements esthétiques modernes dans l'un des salons huppés situés au centre-ville.

Dans ces deux salons décrits plus haut, l'atmosphère de translocalité est présente à divers degrés et émane non seulement du type de clientèle (composée aussi bien de nationaux éthiopiens que, et entre autres, d'expatriés, et de la 'diaspora' éthiopienne en visite ou de retour définitif à Addis Abeba), des types de soins et modèles de coiffure pratiqués, des soins capillaires et corporels, elle est construite et renforcée par l'exposition de produits de soin, d'accessoires et des vêtements en vente pour compléter les revenus des 'BS'.

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<sup>12</sup> Par exemple, dans le cas d'une extension capillaire, la cliente payerait 120 ETB (5,12 euro, taux d'échanges de septembre 2015) à *Fana Beauty Salon* et dans le petit salon de Sidist Kilo 30 ETB (1,28 euro, d'échanges de septembre 2015).

## 7 Les 'BS', scènes d'instruction et de transcendance de la réalité

Dans les villes éthiopiennes, les salons de coiffure où les femmes vont se tresser, se coiffer et se livrer à différents soins corporels et capillaires, sont, comme l'indique à l'origine du mot «salon», des lieux publics, des endroits destinés à accueillir du monde (Ossman 2002). La définition du "salon", telle que suggérée par Ossman, fait recours à la genèse de la constitution de cet espace au sein de la bourgeoisie naissante dans la France du 17<sup>ème</sup> siècle (Ossman 2002: 64ff). L'auteur indique dans son historiographie de cet espace de la vie quotidienne que les salons sont des espaces distincts de l'arène publique, où peuvent se réunir des personnes liées par l'intérêt commun inscrit dans cet espace d'interaction. Ainsi, les salons "[...] *bring people together who need have no special ties beyond the space of interaction they define*" (Ossman 2002: 64). Les salons sont devenus une institution de la vie moderne urbaine, suivant la dynamique de transformation dans la perception de l'espace public et privé (Ossman 2002: 64f).

Dans ce lieu de la vie moderne urbaine, les "salons pour dame" sont devenus seulement après la première guerre mondiale, non seulement des espaces de communication sur les dernières tendances de la mode mais aussi des scènes d'instruction (Ossman 2002: 70; Treiber 2005: 131). Les salons qui servaient alors de lieu d'instruction pour les femmes venues des provinces, ou pour les filles originaires de milieux populaires de travailleurs ou de la classe moyenne, sont aujourd'hui tout aussi significatifs pour les jeunes femmes qui viennent à Addis Abeba en provenance des zones rurales. Pour celles-ci, on a pu constater que les salons d'Addis Abeba sont non seulement un lieu d'apprentissage du métier de coiffeuse/coiffeur mais aussi une scène d'instruction et une arène d'initiation aux pratiques, à l'imaginaire et à un habitus typique à la vie urbaine en Éthiopie. C'est dans ce cadre de la vie urbaine que celles qui fréquentent où travaillent dans ces salons apprennent la façon de communiquer sur les styles de coiffure et ont accès aux magazines et aux images de la mode qu'elles ne peuvent se permettre de s'offrir compte tenu de leur situation sociale précaire. La communication quotidienne dans ces salons est une voie par laquelle s'acquièrent entre autres les compétences requises dans la perception et l'interprétation des modèles de coiffure, leurs significations et les effets qu'elles produisent. En outre, les jeunes apprenties et ouvrières apprennent non seulement la créativité, les codes culturels et la sémantique de la beauté de la métropole Addis Abeba, mais aussi la signification de différents styles pour les différentes couches sociales. Notons également que ce rôle formateur qu'on peut identifier chez les 'BS' est directement lié aux idées de modernité, de beauté et de cosmopolitisme que la plupart de ces salons tentent d'exploiter.

À Addis Abeba comme dans d'autres régions urbaines du pays, les salons de beauté sont le lieu de prédilection de femmes qui s'y rendent et y passent des heures d'attente et subissent des soins d'embellissement. Ces salons sont au-delà de leur fonction primaire, des lieux de communication et d'échange de nouvelles et d'informations (Treiber / Elias, in print 2011). En dehors de ces échanges souvent très animés entre les personnes présentes dans ces lieux, la plupart des salons de beauté de la capitale, sont dotés, en dehors de l'accès à Internet par Wi-Fi pour les clientes munies de leurs smartphones, de médias télévisuels, ou de magazines destinés à inspirer les

clientes ou à les distraire pendant les longues heures d'attente de leur tour pour une séance d'embellissement qui dure plusieurs heures. Les chaînes de télévisions locales et internationales captées sur satellite diffusent non seulement des films Hollywood mais aussi des films de productions locales en amharique.

Dans cet espace spécifique d'interaction, de rapports sociaux et de discussions entre les clientes et les employées, le thème de la beauté (à travers les cheveux, les accessoires, les habits, les chaussures etc.) domine les conversations, sans toutefois exclure la narration de faits de la vie quotidienne, d'événements survenus dans le quartier et d'histoires de vie familiale, ou d'un événement public actuel dans le pays. Il transparaît des conversations entre employées (mains d'œuvre et apprenties) et clientes que le salon est aussi le carrefour d'échanges d'informations sur les possibilités d'émigrer pour le travail au Moyen-Orient. Il existe des salons qui, comme *Netsanet Beauty Salon* (ce salon possède une agence à Addis Abeba et une autre à Al Murar à Dubaï) détiennent des agences dans les pays d'accueil de la migration pour le travail d'Éthiopiennes au Moyen-Orient. Ces salons attisent donc chez leurs employées l'ambition et l'aspiration de migrer avec la promesse d'un meilleur salaire de coiffeuse au Moyen-Orient.

## 8 Conclusion

La métropole Addis Abeba connaît actuellement un développement urbain fortement conditionné d'une part par la force des structures politiques et socio-économiques, et d'autre part par les flux de personnes, de biens et d'idées en provenance de différents horizons du globe. C'est dans cette perspective que le présent article a essayé de mettre en lumière un aspect de la citadinité à Addis Abeba identifié comme étant le penchant pour des pratiques et des représentations translocales. Ce trait caractéristique de la citadinité à Addis Abeba est aussi nourri par la production d'une atmosphère de translocalité perceptible à différents degrés et de manière différente par les personnes qui travaillent dans les salons de beauté et par celles et ceux qui fréquentent ces lieux. Cette atmosphère qui émane des représentations, de l'action des personnes et de la disposition d'objets dans l'espace nourrit des désirs et des aspirations qui se reflètent dans le style de vie et l'habitus du citadin et de la citadine d'Addis Abeba. Cet idéal de la citadinité des jeunes d'Addis Abeba exige pourtant la possession d'un certain capital économique et culturel (Bourdieu 1984) que beaucoup d'Éthiopiens pensent acquérir par l'émigration, une voie privilégiée pour la mobilité sociale à laquelle s'adonnent des centaines de milliers d'Éthiopiens chaque année (Abbink 1984, Fransen / Kuschminder 2009; Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2010; Schröder 2015; Terrazas 2007). Tel est en particulier le cas des jeunes femmes de classes sociales modestes et marginales observées dans ces salons de beauté et qui aspirent à changer leur existence par le biais de la migration transnationale.

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# Cybercafés in Nairobi

## Social Differences as Urban Phenomenon

Johanna Rieß

### 1 Introduction

Since their emergence cybercafés have become an integral part of Kenyan cities. This article seeks to answer how cybercafés in Nairobi cannot be considered just by themselves but also as urban phenomena. This article seeks to demonstrate that the occupation with urban spaces from a comparative sociology of space perspective – here three cybercafés in different districts in Nairobi – reveals different levels of disparate conditions of the city. Cybercafés here are not considered as spaces on their own but as urban phenomena. Until recently, access to technological developments such as computers and internet services were mainly an urban phenomenon and therefore only accessible in major metropolitan cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa. Over time cybercafés are no longer only an urban phenomenon; more and more cybercafés can be found in rural areas. Currently, in the city of Nairobi, a change in the geographical distribution of cybercafés can be observed. Cybercafés in the big shopping malls have started to disappear whilst an increase in cybercafés in the so-called slum dwelling areas in the last one or two years is observable. One explanation underlying the general trend of tremendous growth of internet usage in Kenya could be the increase of mobile devices as well as better internet connectivity and speed via undersea-cables, i.e. SEACOM and TEAMS. More people are now using mobile devices such as mobile phones, smart phones and laptops to access the internet, a trend accompanied by a reduction in the cost of private internet access and accessibility in home space in better-off parts of the city. Therefore, I assert that cybercafés themselves cannot be perceived as urban phenomenon anymore but their simultaneous occurrence in different districts of the city makes them an urban phenomenon. Viewed through the prism of comparative perspective their social differences (not the cybercafés themselves) appear to be an urban phenomenon.

Academia's occupation with African cities is not new, however the study of socio-economic formation (located within developmental outlook and institutional changes) has witnessed a departure which has tended to regard certain aspects and structures differently, mostly characterized by changing perspectives over time. Initially, African cities were perceived principally as purely developmental chances and spaces for appropriating western modernity (cf. Martin 1995), starting from the 1980s they were seen more as impoverished, chaotic and ungovernable entities. In particular, the so-called 'slums' were presented as the symbol for the crisis of many African cities. (cf. Förster 2013: 235; Obrist 2013: 10). Currently there seems to be a new 'wave' with a rather more idealizing tendency of the 'urban' to improve the reputation of African cities as a space for emerging opportunities. Thus, the unruly and the chaotic become a

pool for creativity that is seen as a fundamental basis for African urban life (Förster 2013: 236 f). In Förster's formation he notes rightly that the social sciences have generally neglected research in African cities: "While they have developed a set of conceptual instruments for the analysis of rural African societies, they have neglected the urban" (Förster 2013: 238). This might be one reason that in many (western-based) articles the city and the urban are taken for granted. Social sciences therefore cannot ignore the tremendous growth in African cities anymore (Macamo 2013: 292) and urgent focus on urban-context research projects are highly needed. However, all these perspectives and perceptions are more from a global north point of view. What is largely overlooked is that for example Nairobi, despite its bad reputation, is a center of attraction for many young Kenyans. Today for them Nairobi is a symbol for modernity and innovation more than ever. Especially for young people, staying in Nairobi is desirable. The urban life provides interesting jobs and educational opportunities. Nairobi also has a very intensive night life that is quite popular on a national and an international level. I talked to some youths in Nairobi who did not materialize their dream of a successful life in Nairobi; but still none of them wanted to go back to their rural homes. Nobody wanted to live a rural life full of privation, preferring instead to live a precarious life in the city always with the hope to make it one day. The option of a rural life was postponed for an older age. Going back to a rural life was also somehow seen as a failure. They often described rural life as boring and without chances.

In this context improving the methodological and theoretical instruments in analyzing African cities is crucial in addressing living in the city. In so far as most academic occupations with cities or urban areas – in general terms – are concerned, research outcomes have tended to regard quantitative methods for cities on a macro level as central while research of urban settings on a micro level has been mostly influenced by qualitative methods. With the sociology of space theory developed by Martina Löw, however, (urban) spaces are seen as societal structures. Therefore, researching spaces on a micro level allows formulating assumptions with regard to the characteristics of the city as a whole.

This article<sup>1</sup> attempts to approach the analysis of the city of Nairobi methodologically via a comparative perspective using a sociology of space framework. The space perspective on three cybercafés in different districts of Nairobi permits a rare entry point when applied to this context to enable a deeper understanding of differences in Nairobi society. The three cybercafés, the Speed Wave Cyber in the city center (central business center), the NGA Trick Cyber in Mathare (so-called slum area), and the Easy Surf Internet Shop in Westlands (upper and middle-class district), were chosen to represent the social and economic diversity of Nairobi. As such, the comparative space perspective of three different cybercafés commenced from an inner perspective of the cybercafés - seen as societal structures - on a micro level to reach out to a more general level of characteristics of the city, without presupposition of poverty and inequality. The sociology of space theory of Löw identifies different structural principals for the constitution of

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on ten months of fieldwork in Nairobi/Kenya. Via participatory observation in three different cyber cafés in various districts of Nairobi and semi-structured interviews with users, I studied the cyber cafés themselves as well as the internet and computer adoption of the users.

space as symbolic and material goods, gender, class or atmosphere. But the analysis of the cybercafés also revealed other interesting aspects. This leads to the comparison of the following spaces constituting aspects: gender, mobility, age, and hierarchical structures. Before the comparison of the cybercafés on the level of the space constituting aspects, the cybercafés are described with regard to symbolic and material goods and living entities.

## 2 General aspects of space theory of Martina Löw

Before talking about the cybercafés, I want to highlight some aspects of the sociology of space of Martina Löw. In her theory, she tries to overcome a number of contradictions of common space theoretical approaches.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Löw underlies among other things the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens and understands the formation of space as interaction between action and structure. Unlike Giddens, Löw perceives not just social forms as structures but also the materiality of space. “With regard to space, this points to the need to expand Giddens’s theory to include the materiality of space at the structural level” (Löw 2008: 33). Since Giddens understands structures as societal structures, also spaces defined as societal structures allow conclusions about society. Thereby structures (and also spaces) are not seen primarily as restrictions of action possibilities but as help for orientation to assess societal expectations<sup>3</sup> much better. How people arrange their rooms and how they use their rooms can be seen as a reproduction of societal structures and expectation. Via repetitions structures are maintained and institutionalized. With Giddens concept of “dualism of action and structure” it can be explained how people do reproduce structure and how structure on the one hand does restrict the action of people, and on the other hand does help people in orientation and expectation (cf. Giddens 1988: 73f). With Löw, spaces can be seen as (re)production of actions and structures. Therefore, in the description of the cybercafés both aspects are implicitly present, because neither structure nor action can be seen and described without the other.

In this regard, Löw differentiates two processes that are relevant for the constitution of space. On one hand, she talks about the so-called spacing with what she describes the placing of goods and living entities, thus as the construction, building and positioning (cf. Löw 2012: 158). On the other hand, it needs synthesis for the constitution of space, which means the processes of perception,

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<sup>2</sup> Generally, there are two main trends in the social sciences regarding the handling of space, whereby the sociological way of defining space is highly influenced by philosophical and physical ideas. On one side there are the so-called ‘absolutists’ and on the other side the so-called ‘relativists’. The absolutists understand space in a dual way by distinguishing body and space. This means that bodies exist in spaces and spaces exist independent from bodies. In this perspective spaces are, as in everyday understanding, conceptualized as ‘containers’ that can be randomly filled without changing. This static understanding of spaces sees space independently from social actions. The relativists, in contrast, conceptualize spaces as emergences of the relational positioning of bodies. In this perspective spaces are constituted via moving bodies and are therefore constantly changing. Here spaces are seen as the results of arrangements that are limited by time (cf. Löw 2012: 18).

<sup>3</sup> Luhmann uses the concept of expectation-expectations (*Erwartungs-Erwartungen*) and describes the situation in which people construct the assumed expectation of the other and act according to the constructed expectation of others. Structures and therefore spaces, reduce the complexity of these constructions to a manageable limit (vgl. Luhmann 2001).

imagination and memory that are necessary to summarize goods and living entities to spaces (cf. Löw 2012: 159). However, this is a theoretical differentiation: in daily life both processes of spacing and synthesis exist simultaneously because action is always a process. In other words, building, constructing and positioning, therefore spacing, is not possible without synthesis, meaning the simultaneous connection of goods and living entities to spaces (cf. Löw 2012: 159).

Another important aspect for the constitution of spaces is the practical consciousness, which does not only include knowledge based on conscious reflections but also knowledge based on everyday repetition of certain action processes. The repetition of certain action processes, particularly the more permanent routines, can be institutionalized and can constitute institutionalized spaces.

“To speak of a duality of space is to express the idea that spaces do not simply exist but are created in (generally repetitive) action, and that, as spatial structures embedded in institutions, they guide action. Together, the routines of day-to-day activities and the institutionalization of social processes ensures the reproduction of social (and thus of spatial) structures” (Löw 2008: 40).

The institutionalization of space can be seen as a restriction of action possibilities but also as orientation and guide via the standardization of spacing and synthesis (cf. Löw 2012: 163).

Further aspects for the constitution of space, according to Löw are the structural principals such as gender and class (cf. Löw 2012: 179). According to Löw, the structural principals of gender and class influence every part of life. They traverse actions, spaces but also bodies.

Bodies in their form of constituting space are influenced by societal structures, conditions of action situations and impacts of social goods. Class and gender are determined by the habitus as a principal that creates according to gender and class specific cultures, which are articulated in different forms of femininity and masculinity and different variations of class culture. Also age, way of life, physical and mental possibilities and also the affiliation to a religious or an ethnic group do influence these differences (cf. Löw 2012: 189).<sup>4</sup> According to Löw, the structural principals of gender and class are also combined with social inequalities and oppression<sup>5</sup> (cf. Löw 2012: 188). Therefore, spaces exemplify the distribution in a society that is mostly unequal and favors specific groups of people (cf. Löw 2012: 272).

### **3 Specific aspects of Martina Löw’s space theory for the constitution of the cybercafés as spaces**

For the description of the three selected cybercafés, the following aspects of the space theory of Martina Löw are relevant:

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<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the interiors of flats and houses could be seen as reproductions of societal structures and expectations.

<sup>5</sup> Also age and physical and mental constitutions can be reasons for inequalities.

- The description of the spacing of the social goods with which the cybercafés are equipped. Social goods can be material goods such as tables or chairs or symbolic goods, including songs, values or rules of conduct.
- Materials as well as symbolic goods are never exclusively material or symbolic. Which characteristic dominates depends on the handling of the social goods and on the context they are put in (cf. Löw 2008: 34). Via the parallel description of the spacing of the social goods in the three cybercafés the material goods become more symbolic goods by getting markers of a differentiated society.
- The juxtaposition of the description of the cybercafés appears more in their symbolic dimension. In addition, the spacing of the living entities in the space of the cybercafés in their positioning and movements will be described. There are two groups of people in the cybercafés: The employees respectively owners, and the user respectively visitors. What interests me is the relationship between these groups and how they influence each other.
- In the description, the atmosphere<sup>6</sup> of the cybercafés will be particularly described. Löw calls the atmospheres of spaces perception, for example the perception of sounds or smells. In Löw's framework these perceptions are quite important for the constitution of spaces because the concept of perceptions expresses that people who position or connect social goods, cannot just see them but also smell, hear or feel them (cf. Löw 2012: 195). Perception, therefore, is considered a process of the simultaneous aura of social goods and living entities and the perception activity of the bodily sense (cf. Löw 2012: 195 f).
- In the description, the structural principals of gender and class are also important, but so too is age that is not a structural principal for Löw. Class is a difficult category for Nairobi society because of its unspecific and generalizing nature. In this context, class here is mainly understood in its economic dimension and as an underlying difference between the different cybercafés. According to Löw, people choose their spaces, as houses, flats and districts according to their class whereby they reproduce class structures (cf. Löw 2012:182).

With the help of these theoretical thoughts, I will next describe and compare the spaces of three cybercafés in the different districts of Nairobi: The Speed Wave Cyber in the city center, the NGA Trick Cyber in Mathare and the Easy Surf Internet Shop in Westlands. The comparison of these socio-economic and socio-culturally different spaces - understood with Löw as societal structures - should help to understand societal differences in Nairobi and reveal characteristics of the city.

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<sup>6</sup> I want to point out the methodological difficulties concerning the description of the different spaces. My observations are my own synthesis that visualizes the social goods and living entities in the cybercafés. Also, the described atmospheres and structural principals are shaped by my perceptions. These are not just objective descriptions but are deeply characterized by my subjective perspective. Descriptions of spaces are always highly influenced by the perspective of the researcher and their subjective synthesis. The different positioning of me as a researcher in the different cybercafés biased the descriptions. For example, in the cybercafé in the city center I had more possibilities for intensive talks with the employees and the visitors than in Westlands. In particular, the employees and users at city center café were much more open to my research interests.

## **4 The Speed Wave Cyber in the city center**

### **4.1 Localizing the Speed Wave Cyber in the city center**

The city center, also known as the CBD (Central Business District), is one of the most important business centers in Nairobi and a very important public administration district. Many public office buildings like the parliament or the City Hall are situated there, but also lots of colleges and universities can be found there. Many of these buildings are connected to Kenya's past, starting in the colonial times, during the time of independence and the post-colonial era. The city center is one of the liveliest districts in Nairobi. Full of urban activities and movements; millions of urban dwellers thrust their way through the busy streets. Most of the people who are moving through the streets of the city center are formally dressed mostly in business outfits. The city center, unlike various major European cities, does not provide living spaces but only business space. Hence, this confines people coming to the city center to stick to a specific purpose of visiting the city. The city center constitutes a business center hosting office spaces for workers as well as spaces that host job seekers. Skyscrapers are everywhere and most business offices are embedded in them as well as shops, hotels and fast food restaurants. In the central part of the city center, the streets are clean and cared for by the city workers. But this impression of 'clean' in a busy and somehow cared for district is deceptive at best and on closer inspection one gets a different perspective. The front of the first-class global chain the Hilton Hotel, next to the Hilton Park, is characterized by a large number of job seekers parading or uniformly seated in benches wasting away their time with the hope of securing jobs that are non-existent.

In the recent past, the city center hosted various shopping malls that also formed the central space for many cybercafés in Nairobi. Despite structural and reorganization changes of the city center due to city expansion and a whole set of factors, still observable are the resilience and continued presence of cybercafés in the city center. The appearance of the city center is still like no other district in Nairobi, where they are mainly characterized by new property and technological development like Upper Hill district and Westlands. The outlook is characterized by computer colleges, computer and mobile phone services shops, cybercafés, computer and mobile phone shops, outlets belonging to major internet and mobile phone service providers like Safari.com or Orange phone companies.

### **4.2 The Speed Wave Cyber**

The Speed Wave Cyber is located in the middle of the city center on the third floor of the World Business Centre (WBC) in Latema Road, a building near the central Matatu bus station on Tom Mboya Street. It can be accessed through the main entrance on Tom Mboya Street or a side entrance at the Government Lane. The building is guarded by private security scanning everyone entering both entrances with a metal detector. However, the presence of these security guards and their procedures are compromised by a transactional culture and are not effective because of

a differential and unequal application of the scanning process, especially if you are known to them or pay them some token in order to gain entry without security check. The visitors of the cybercafé enter the Speed Wave Cyber via the WBC through glass doors and in the event that the glass windows are opened, the surrounding noise from the variable mix of hustle and bustle invades the cyber space and fills the small room with voices and indefinite murmurs. The Speed Wave Cyber is comparable in terms of structure and environmental surrounding to the other cybercafés in the WBC, also by the fact that it is a relatively smaller cybercafé that holds on average 15 computers per station. One minute of internet surfing costs 80 cents. The cybercafé is equipped with a wooden construction for the computer stations as found in nearly every cybercafé. These are connected computer desks made out of chipboard where every desk is separated by a wooden plate. Every computer desk is equipped with a flexible keyboard box that enables the user to pull out the keyboard if needed and put it back if not needed anymore. It is quite useful because the computer workstations are quite cramped and do not provide a lot of space for the users. Most of the computer workstations are equipped with flat screens, some with tube monitors. The workstations with the tube monitors are not very popular with the users; they are very rarely used. Some of the computer workstations are not equipped with a computer at all; they contain a frame for laptop usage. In front of every computer desk stands a somewhat run-down white plastic chair. On the left side, next to the entrance is the counter area. This area is separated from the rest of the cyber by a wooden counter. The counter area is accessible only for the service staff via a swinging door. Some small plastic containers with lollies or bubble gum are positioned into the wooden counter. Sweets or matchboxes are sometimes issued to clients as change instead of coins due to the inadequate stock of small coins in circulation and perceived low values to facilitate the smooth settlement of such transactions.

Given the high overhead costs incurred in running a cybercafé, it follows that the space is not fixed only to internet services; observable also are soft drinks and refreshments offered for sale to cyber clients in strikingly visible inside fridges situated behind the counter. The fresh drinks including sodas are not just very popular with the cybercafé users, but also with the visitors of the surrounding beauty salons. The employees of the beauty salons are buying the sodas quite frequently as an incentive for retaining and encouraging their customers to revisit. Drink sales is an additional and supplementary source of income for the Speed Wave Cyber apart from revenue generated from the provided internet services. A green wooden rack is also fixed at the wall behind the counter. On the rack, you can find small packages of cookies and rolls that are sold as snacks to the customers.

The Speed Wave cybercafé, just like other cybercafés, is not just a place where people have internet access but also as a small service center. In addition to the internet service, it also provides a scan, print and lamination service to its clients.

At the initial stage of my visits to the Speed Wave Cyber, Victor and Kelly<sup>7</sup> were employees in the

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<sup>7</sup> I use the first names of the employees for two reasons: 1. During my ten months stay in Nairobi I developed a very close relationship with both the employees and users in the cybercafé. Therefore, it seems strange to pretend a distance

cybercafé. Since the Speed Wave Cyber is situated on the third floor and has a lot of competition from the city center as well as in the WBC building itself, it is functioning via the feel-good factor and personal relationships. Victor and Kelly use the Speed Wave Cyber as a meeting point with their friends. Their friends and contacts regularly visit mainly to talk to them but also to use the internet service. Also, the employees from other shops in the WBC pay visits during their coffee/tea-breaks for a chat and sometime to use the internet especially in the evening when the cyber is full of clients on their way home after working. Students and pupils comprise a huge proportion of the evening clientele at the Speed Wave Cyber but also older people who came to use the internet after work. During the daytime, the cybercafé is normally mainly filled with unemployed people using the internet to search for jobs online. The customers were quite a mixed regarding age and gender. When Kelly and Victor were working at the cybercafé, I got the impression that more men were attending the cyber. After approximately three months, the cybercafé changed its owner as well as its employees. With this change in ownership Victor and Kelly lost their jobs. The new employees are Millicent and Christabel together with a third service employee. Upon Millicent and Christabel taking over, the gender of the clientele shifted towards more women visiting the cyber than men. Victor, Kelly and their friends also continued visiting the Speed Wave Cyber quite regularly.

## **5 The NGA<sup>8</sup> Trick Cyber in Mathare**

### **5.1 Localizing the NGA Trick Cyber in Mathare (slum)**

After Kibera, Mathare is the second largest so-called slum area in the eastern part of Nairobi. Nearly one million people are living in this collection of several smaller so-called slums. In the core area of the so-called slum, the Mathare Valley, people are living in corrugated iron and wooden huts in very close proximity. There is virtually no infrastructure, meaning no tarmac roads, no power supply, no water lines, and no sanitation. Although primary school education is free nowadays, there are not enough primary schools in Mathare to make a comprehensive school education possible. That is one reason why the illiteracy rate in Mathare is comparatively high against other parts of the city. Mathare is known for its gang criminality. Different criminal groups fight for supremacy. It is about protection rackets, second rentals for the huts and charges for the hardly present sanitations. HIV/Aids and murders result in a high mortality rate. Many aid organizations initiated projects in Mathare to improve the life of the people there. However, such scattered individual projects are not really causing the improvements hoped for the people.

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by using formal names just to require a standard of a more formal academic writing. 2. Due to ethical considerations, the usage of the first names is also a way to anonymize my interviewees.

<sup>8</sup> NGA is an abbreviation of the name of the cybercafé operator and his grandma.

## 5.2 The NGA Trick Cyber

The NGA Trick Cyber is situated on a tarmacked main road that leads to Mathare and the Eastleigh area within the east-land district. The houses on the road are mainly stone multi-story buildings that are used mostly as living spaces. Sometimes small shops and kiosk are situated in the bottom storeys. At the roadsides, some provisional assembled wooden booths were created where one can buy vegetables and fruits. The NGA Trick Cyber is located in the outlying areas where Mathare slum is fast growing, and the cybercafé in this sense is seen as contributing structures attributable to the expansion of Mathare slums farthest away from its center. The distribution of cybercafés can be found at the outskirts of slum areas away from the typically overwhelmed power grids that often leads to blackouts from a shortage in power supply that characterizes the inner parts of the slums.

The NGA Trick cybercafé is situated on the ground floor of a multi-story stone building with a courtyard that is directly located at the main road. The house belongs to the family of the cybercafé owner Jason, so he does not have to pay rent. The cybercafé is only advertised on a small signboard at the entrance of the house and can be missed very easily.

Entering the house one stands at first in front of a small kiosk that is located in a type of a grid cage that I was told was there for security reasons. A small corridor leads past the kiosk into the NGA Trick Cyber. The only natural source of light is the light that enters via the entrance door; in the rear part of the building where the cybercafé is located, there are no windows. So the cybercafé nearly depends completely on electricity for lighting, and if there is a power blackout (which happens quite regularly) the cybercafé is enveloped in absolute darkness forcing the owner to use candles for light.

The cybercafé has a total of four computer workstations. Operator Jason started the internet business in November 2012. At the beginning, he was just capable of buying one second-hand computer, nowadays he has bought three more second-hand computers. The computers are quite old models and a bit run-down. Jason bought them on the second-hand computer market in Nairobi. The cybercafé is quite cramped; there are not enough chairs for the four workstations and the operator Jason. However, virtually never all of the workstations are occupied at the same time, so the three/four present chairs are mostly enough. The computer workstations are situated side by side at the right wall of the room. The screens, two flat screens and two tube monitors, are located on wooden desks that are connected to each other. Wooden plates are embedded in the desk construction to separate the single workstations just like in the Speed Wave Cyber in the city center. The keyboards are located in front of the screens on the desks. The computers are situated on a batten that is fixed under the table-tops. One could smell urine in the cybercafé because the toilet is situated in a little room in the middle of the cybercafé and the walls do not reach the ceiling. In the situation where the workstations are occupied, needing to use the toilet means having to ask the user opposite the toilet door to stand up.

A shelf is fixed over the workstations where paper is stacked and where shelved technical devices

like a printer and a laminator are kept. A picture of the former President Mwai Kibaki and current President Uhuru Kenyatta<sup>9</sup> are hanging on the wall over the shelf. An old photocopying machine and another photocopying machine with a printer are standing side by side on a wooden desk at the left side of the room.

Jason uses a small wooden cabinet placed at the rear wall of the cybercafé as a counter and desk. Jason used a very new and expensive laptop in what was a huge contrast to rest of the equipment. There is another employee at the cyber who also helps in the kiosk.

During the week days, there were not so many people visiting the cybercafé. Just a few people used the computers or the internet. Most of the visitors wanted a typed text or needed a copy. In the evenings and on the weekends, more users came to the cybercafé. The users were mostly younger men and rarely older men. Hardly any women come to visit the NGA Trick Cyber to use the internet. One minute of web browsing cost 1 Ksh per minute. In addition to web browsing, the NGA Trick cybercafé also offered copy, scan and lamination services. One service that is highly used was the typing of handwritten texts on the computer. The typed texts were then often sent as emails or printed out; the copy service was also often used.<sup>10</sup>

## 6 The Easy Surf Internet Shop in Westlands

### 6.1 Localizing the Easy Surf Internet Shop in Westlands (Sarit Centre)

Westlands district - besides the city center - is the most important business district in Nairobi. Westlands was mainly an Indian residential area during colonial and immediately post-colonial times. During the 1990s and 2000s, driven by property development boom, rental fees in the city center skyrocketed as demand for private sector office space was easily filled by expanding local banks and service-based business as alternative rental spaces to the crowded Nairobi business center. Due to this shift, Westlands became an alternative space for the relocation of private businesses seeking the opportunity to buy cheap land and rental spaces for convenient prices. In the current time, many banks, business and aid-organizations have re-located their businesses to Westlands. Westlands offers a variable mix of interactive relationships between residential, business, and social life inasmuch as structural changes are linked to this development which underpins the lively nightlife and famous disco clubs, both a recent phenomenon.

Other very significant characteristics unique to Westlands is the visible exhibitionism of luxury cars driven in recently re-tarmacked roads and expensive villas and luxurious apartment blocks

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<sup>9</sup> The NGA Trick Cyber was the only cybercafé where I found pictures of Kenyan presidents on the walls.

<sup>10</sup> But also in a 'cybercafé village' near the University of Nairobi which is located a bit outside Nairobi, a place where cyber cafés are really numerous and closely located, a very important service was the typing of seminar papers. Most students had a smartphone or a tablet but not so many had a laptop. I was told that the borrowing of laptops for the purpose of doing research or writing a paper was quite common. Those who could not afford to buy or borrow a laptop went to one of the numerous cyber cafés behind the university and paid somebody to type their handwritten papers.

that serve as living spaces for the newly rich. There are two big shopping malls in Westlands: the Sarit Centre and the Westgate Mall. The Sarit Centre was built in 1983 as one of the first shopping malls in Nairobi. The Sarit Centre promotes itself with the slogan: 'City in the city'. The Sarit Centre consists of three floors where you can find many different businesses, banks, cafés, fast-food outlets, a cinema and a supermarket.

The Sarit Centre looks like a windowless block from the outside. The inside is characterized by spiral and rectangular stair constructions. From the middle of the ground floor, one can look up to the third floor, because the floors are built like open balconies. This architecture creates an opening of the mall space but there are virtually no windows and so no daylight can light the floors, resulting in the Sarit Centre being quite dark. Entering the Sarit Centre is like entering a different world because the estimation of the daytime disappears with the daylight, it is always a surprise leaving the mall to realize that it was still daytime. The audience consists mostly of the following categories: white people (mostly tourists, aid workers or businessmen), wealthy Kenyans and Indians. The Sarit Centre is especially busy at the weekends as a popular excursion destination.

## **6.2 The Easy Surf Internet Shop**

The cybercafé Easy Surf Internet Shop is located in a more remote part at the second floor and is not easy to find. Most of the visitors of the cybercafé do not pass by chance, either they know the place or they search for it purposefully.

The Easy Surf Internet Shop in the Sarit Centre is part of a chain of four cybercafés that belonging to an Indian businessman. All cybercafés were opened between 2000 and 2002 and were located in different shopping malls in Nairobi. Three of the four cybercafés have been closed down recently; the only one remaining now is the one in the Sarit Centre. Different reasons can be assigned to this factor but this is beyond the scope of this article and can be the focus of another paper. Here I will focus on the improvement of ICT technology and infrastructure as a factor useful in delineating changes and trends in explaining the closure of the cyber cafes. An additional explanation perhaps that enables a researcher to explain this closure of cyber cafes in this area is a gradual reduction in price for computers, mobile phones and smart phones and internet access. Especially in the economically better off parts of the districts, more and more people can afford computers/laptops/tablets/smart phones and fast internet access via cables in their homes. In those areas, the cybercafé has been in fast decline, particularly in these residential areas. Despite these residential units installing computer devices and internet-access, not so many people have printers or scanners installed in their homes. In this context, some cybercafés are still in operation because people need to scan documents and cyber cafes are providing these additional services. The Easy Surf Internet Shop is uniquely positioned to survive because it is situated in a central business area where people are still in need of printing and scanning services not available at their residential spaces. In addition, Easy Surf Internet Shop's proximity next to the British Council is strategic in the sense that it specializes its services to the visa application needs that fulfils the

British Embassy's visa application standards.

All the cybercafés, as I could see on an advertisement flyer, were furnished with the same design. They appeared to be modern and colorful. All chairs, worktables and the place separating sheets were designed in a standardized modern color concept: black comfortably padded office chairs, grey hard plastic tables and light green place separating sheets with 'hole design'. Computers, flat screens and keyboards were all from the computer company Dell. Feel-good factor and comfort were highly emphasized. The air conditioning was working all the time and was spreading a continuously monotonous buzz, which was now and then accompanied by discreet music.

At my first visit before my first login I had to choose a username and a password at the counter. At the following visits, I was able to login directly at the computers.

It was always very quiet in the Easy Surf Internet Shop. The service staff are very discreet, and cordial especially while helping customers. Loud talks or loud laughter attracted immediate attention and were mostly sanctified by unfriendly glances. The overall procedures in the Easy Surf Internet Shop were more professional compared to the other cybercafés. One minute of web browsing cost 5 Ksh per minute, which is slightly more expensive compared to other cybercafés visited in various districts. Therefore, many users seemed to avoid lengthy web browsing and focused more of the slotted time for primarily printing documents attached to emails or from USB sticks hence saving money by limiting unnecessary web browsing.

The cybercafé specializes in providing specialized assistance for elderly clients. Some users told me that they need technical support, particularly with more complex online tasks or applications. The cybercafé has mixed users mainly older people and also younger people using printouts services and surfing the net. Half of the cybercafé was also regularly used for official computer training offered by the manager of the cybercafé. Besides web browsing and printing, the Easy Internet Shop also offers scanning, laminating, copying, faxing and visa form services.

The Easy Surf Internet Shop offers special services tailored to the needs of its customers and takes advantage of attractive factors preferred by the pool of clients that visits it, including car-parking availability at the Sarit Centre and the tight security checks<sup>11</sup> in the Westgate mall following the recent terrorist attacks nearby.

## **7 Comparative perspectives of the three cybercafés**

The description of the social goods in the cybercafés illustrates the differences between them. In the following section, I will compare the cybercafé more concretely through different space constituting aspects as gender, mobility, age structure and hierarchical structures as social goods.

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<sup>11</sup> After the terroristic attack on the Westgate Mall this feeling of security seems to be an illusion.

## 7.1 Gender distribution in the cybercafés

According to Löw gender is one of the structural principals for the constitution of space. (cf. Löw 2012: 179). Gender as a structural principal influences every part of the life. Gender distribution was one of the differences between the cybercafés. There was no huge difference between the distribution of men and women in the Easy Surf Internet Shop in the Sarit Centre; the users were quite mixed. In the Speed Wave Cyber in the city center, there were more men at the beginning of my observation, although this bias was nearly balanced following the change of ownership. I could observe a clear difference in gender distribution in the NGA Trick Cyber in Mathare, with mainly male visitors in the cybercafé and nearly no female users. Different aspects could explain this. One aspect could be that the visit of a cybercafé is mostly associated with official businesses as well as for job searching. From a conservative cultural perspective, it is the duty of a man to look for a job because he is seen as the family breadwinner and supplier. Therefore, one could conclude that there is a more culturally based conservative understanding of gender roles in the so-called slums. Women are not only the passive targets of this view.

This conclusion falls short, however, because it does not recognize the diversity within women by implying that there are orderly relationships. Contrary to popular opinion embedded in such patriarchal-conservatism on women's role that purely see women's role as uniform or homogenous, a huge group of single mothers as an example of a sub-category take care of their children on their own, because their husbands or boyfriends left them or they decided from the outset to live without a permanent relationship. Most of these men do not take any financial responsibility. These women are forced to work hard to survive with their children. To secure their survival many women are working, also because of lower educational level, in the so-called informal sector. Therefore, most of them are effectively cut from the formal job market that is approachable via the internet. Another argument for the absence of women in the cybercafé in Mathare is the connotation of cybercafés as male spaces. From the start, cybercafés were more a space for men than for women. This connotation seems to be still more widespread in the slum areas such as Mathare and Kibera than in other upper middle class dwelling spaces including the city center or Westlands. But still in the city center, many women came accompanied by men or another woman, and not so many came alone to the cybercafé. Even though the public space at Easy Surf Internet Shop was more open for female users, the male users had the greater naturalness to use the computers and were using them much longer. It seemed that men generally also had more financial means to come to the cybercafé. After the change of ownership and with the new service staff Millicent and Crystabel, more women visited the Speed Wave cybercafé.

## 7.2 Mobility as precondition and result of the constitution of urban spaces

The three cybercafés researched here are situated in the urban space of Nairobi and are therefore constituted as urban spaces. They are part of the urban constitutional processes of single users, who made the cybercafés part of their individual urban space constitution. The cybercafés are constituted by processes of usage of the visitors, but also by their atmospheres that are manifested

by equipment, services and geographical location. On the one hand, users are choosing cybercafés that fit to them, whilst on the other hand cybercafés attract people or push them away. Users are seen here not just as individuals but also as representatives of different societal classes. For Löw the formation of urban space can be understood as a synthesis of different classes that means different classes synthesize the urban space according to their class-specific habitus (cf. Löw 2012: 262). Therefore, cybercafés should not be seen as static and isolated spaces, but rather via their users as dynamic and connected urban spaces that are synthesized by different classes. The cybercafés differed concerning their geographical location and therefore in the mobility of their users.

The Speed Wave Cyber in the city center could be characterized as a passageway of people from home to work and vice versa. This passage mobility was strengthened by the fact that there is nearly no living space in the city center only business space. Some visitors also used the cybercafé as a meeting point with friends. To reach the city center and the cybercafé most visitors came by matatu; none of them had a car. The geographical location of the cybercafé and its character as a passageway indicates that the audience is quite mixed in regard to age, class and gender. Therefore, it cannot easily be associated with one specific class, but the aspect of mobility of its users could be seen as a common feature of this group.

In addition, the Easy Surf Internet Shop in the Sarit Centre in Westlands, can be reached by matatu or car and therefore, as with the Speed Wave Cyber, indicates the mobility of its users. Unlike the city center, the Sarit Centre offers a lot of parking possibilities. However, to reach the shopping mall is a bit more expensive because generally fares in the direction to Westlands are higher and not everybody can afford a car. The Sarit Centre is to a higher degree than the city center a meeting point for business or private people and also as a destination for leisure activities. Exceedingly few come to the shopping mall just to visit the cybercafé. Some visitors work in the Sarit Centre and its surroundings; some will also go shopping and eat something in the little fast food restaurants. The geographical location of the Easy Surf Internet Shop is a clearer indicator in regard to its users compared to the Speed Wave Cyber. Visiting the Easy Surf Internet Shop is much more exclusive regarding its accessibility, its embedding in a shopping mall and the cost for internet usage. Therefore, its users can be associated rather to the middle and upper class.

In contrast, the NGA Trick Cyber in Mathare is situated in a location in Nairobi where there have been no cybercafés for a long time. It has only been in the last two years that more and more cybercafés have appeared in the so-called slum areas. In regard to the development of cybercafés in the urban space of Nairobi, one could speak of a decentralization or regionalization of cybercafés. The users of the NGA Trick Cyber mainly come from its immediate surroundings. Some users come by matatu, but most visitors reach the cybercafé on foot. The decentered locations of cybercafés at sites such as Mathare enable less mobile people to access the internet or give even mobile users a more comfortable possibility to access the internet near their residences.

The clients of the Speed Wave Cyber in the city center were more mixed, unspecific and mobile and could be associated with the middle class. In contrast, the clients of the Easy Surf Internet

Shop were even more mobile and could be described as from a higher class.

The three examples refer to the fact that the middle and upper classes are much more mobile than the lower classes in Nairobi. The Easy Surf Internet Shop in Westlands can attract a supra-local audience from different middle and upper-class districts; the NGA Trick Cyber in Mathare attracts primarily a local audience. The economical factor, which can be found in the class specific aspect of mobility, partly organizes the inclusion and exclusion with regard to the access to real spaces of the cybercafés and therefore access to the internet. Geographical location, as well as equipment and service, indicate which audience feels attracted.

### **7.3 Age structure of cybercafé users**

Although age according to Löw is not a structural principal for the constitution of space (cf. Löw 2012: 189), one significant difference that sets the cybercafés apart was the age structure of the users. As shown in the previous section, the Speed Wave Cyber in the city center was characterized by the mobility of its users. Therefore, the age structure of the customers was not so obvious, including younger as well as middle aged users who visited the cybercafé, so the users in the Speed Wave Cyber in the city center were quite mixed. In the NGA Trick cybercafé in Mathare, the internet users were mainly younger and mostly below 25 years old, while the users in the Easy Surf Internet Shop in the Sarit Centre were mainly older and clearly above 25. While older users in Mathare were mostly not using the computer but the writing service, older user people in Westlands could afford to pay for a special computer and internet helping service that was offered in the Easy Surf Internet Cybercafé in the Sarit Centre. Therefore, many older people in Mathare are under-exposed to computers and internet than their age mates in Westlands. In Westlands, the upper and upper middle class with purchasing power tends to be exposed to computers and hence exploit the services available at the cybercafé in the Sarit Centre. Thus, Westland's older people can easily appropriate computers and internet against payment whereby the older users in Mathare are more or less excluded from these technologies. The cybercafé in Westlands have crafted a business outreach strategy that encourages older people (as a new group of customers) to fulfil the gap left by the absence of younger people infrequently visiting and utilizing the cybercafé. To avoid low stock turnovers most of the cybercafés in the area resorted to offering focused services to the older constituency as a way of overcoming the gap created by younger clients' migration away from cybercafés and as a way of generating additional income; in contrast to Mathare, where the majority of the cybercafé's customers are mainly younger people (with older customers only visiting the cybercafé for the writing service).

For the social researcher to assess and compare these different cybercafés, these observations can usefully guide the illustration of another difference within and across the cybercafés. In the upper and better middle-class areas, many households can afford computers/laptops and internet connection at home, rendering visits to cybercafés unnecessary, whereby in Mathare only an exceedingly few can afford a computer/laptop let alone home internet connection. The declining trends occluded in cybercafés in upper middle-class areas (particularly in the shopping malls) and

the contrasting observed expansion trend of cybercafés in the lower-class slum areas can be seen as a positive decentralization trend of internet access possibilities. In addition, it does expose the economic and sub-structural differences in Nairobi society, particularly with regards to age categories. Clearly, these differences in class utility and appropriation possibilities of computer and internet cannot be observed for the younger generation anymore.

#### **7.4 Hierarchical structures as symbolic goods**

Another level of comparison that arises from the space theory of Löw (cf. Löw 2008: 34) is the comparison of symbolic goods. In the case of the cybercafés, I define behavioral rules, the understanding of service and hierarchical structures as symbolic goods.

The behavioral rules for the users were quite different in the three cybercafés. In the Easy Surf Internet Shop in the Sarit Centre most of the users were very quiet and reserved. Talk between users or users and service staff were mainly in whispers. Other visitors or service staff disapproved loud laughing or talking. Although the personalized login windows at the computers suggested something personal, the relationship between service staff and most users was quite reserved and professionalized. In talks with the boss of the cybercafé, who was Indian, it became obvious that the relationship between her and her service staff was quite difficult and characterized by great mistrust. She suspected her Kenyan service staff of embezzling money from the current receipts. She tried to control her service staff by regular visits in the cybercafé.

The behavioral rules for users in the Speed Wave Cyber in the city center were rather loose. Loud talking and laughter were normal here. One of the service staff (Victor) contributed with his entertainment concept to the loud atmosphere of the cybercafé. The entertaining atmosphere was very attractive to many users. Further, the relationship between service staff and visitors was friendly and close. This relaxed-noisy atmosphere was intensified by the informal visits of other employees of the WBC and friends of the service staff. There was always an easy coming and going. In addition, here the relationship between service staff and the owner was clearly hierarchical. During Victor and Kelly's time, the owner passed by regularly to control his service staff. While Millicent and Crystabel worked in the cybercafé, the appointed manager supervised the work environment through regular visits. But the Kenyan owner, who lived in the US, did not trust his manager and tried to control her by staying in close contact with the service staff via email and phone and regularly interrogated them concerning the activities of the manager.

Also in the NGA Trick Cyber, there were no strict behavioral rules for the users. I got the impression that many users entered the cybercafé with a certain caution and timidity. Most of the visitors knew how to use a computer, but were partly not so experienced and self-conscious in dealing with it. Because there were not so many customers at once, it was mostly very quiet. The silence was sometimes interrupted by noise from the kiosk or engine noise from the street. Jason was both owner and service staff at the same time, but between him and his service employee, there was a clear difference. Most of the time the service staff looked after the customers, while

Jason was busy with his laptop. He did not really try to hide his arrogance; the service staff, in contrast, met the customers with more understanding. Jason was quite conscious concerning his privileged position and let other people, in particular his customers feel it.

According to Löw in symbolic goods one can also find class and gender specific structural principals. These differences can be especially seen in the Easy Surf Internet Shop in the Sarit Centre and in the NGA Trick Cyber in Mathare. Because of hierarchical structures, the cybercafés are also power spaces in which positions of superiority are negotiated.

## 8 Conclusion

The observations in the three different cybercafés illustrate the differences between the cybercafés but also differences within the cybercafés. The comparative space perspective that informs a differentiated view to an urban society that in many respects can only be understood by its differences rest on the premise that the differences get to the center of observation and become an urban characteristic. The space of the cybercafés, understood on the one hand as (re)production of structure and actions, and on the other hand, not as material but as societal give an insight into an urban city society and reveals differences as one of the main characteristics of Nairobi. The sociology of space perspective from Löw applied to a Nairobi urban context, here in a comparative approach, helps to consider urban differences as more differentiated and to understand 'the urban' as remaining still an open research question, both methodologically and theoretically.

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# Khartoum. The Past, Present and Future

## Urban Planning Practices at the Margin of Africa

Azza Mustafa Babikir Ahmed

“Reading an African city is not an easy task. Reading a city like Khartoum is an even more challenging mission. It is a space which has been shaped and reshaped throughout its pre and post-colonial history by movement, political instability and socio-cultural changes. Its geo-political position in the heart of the African continent, while providing a gateway to the Arabic world, has rendered it the object of many influencing and, in some instances, contradictory dynamics.” (Nada Hussein Wannan, 2005: 302)

### 1 Introduction

Urban spatial planning practices are well embedded in a *planning culture* that reflects diverse values and beliefs, different positionalities, and bureaucratic and legal systems (Knieling / Othengrafen 2009). In the African continent, urban planning practices are miscellaneous and the attempt to understand them as an entity will increase the chances of over generalization (Watson 2002). However, scholars who are interested in understanding urban planning practices in Africa followed, intentionally or unintentionally, the views of Mahmood Mamdani (1996) who justifies the study of Africa as a unit of analysis due to a set of correspondences that are rooted in the colonial history, which permits a certain level of generalization (Watson 2002). According to Silva (2015), urban planning practices in Africa are reflections of their cultural contexts which are partially linked to the planning cultures in Europe during colonial times. Nevertheless, colonial legacy continued in urban planning practices in Africa even after independence (Silva 2015). National governments preserve some laws and regulations from the colonial era that served their political and economic interests, while simultaneously abolish other practices and replace them with others, which are perceived as essential reforms that responds to the emerging urban conditions in many African cities.

I will present in this paper an empirical case of urban planning in Khartoum, the capital city of the Sudan, which is considered as a contact area between the African and the Arab worlds, to reflect on some fundamental issues that intrigued many scholars to understand urban planning in Africa. I categorize this paper into three main phases. The first phase is the colonial urban planning practices; the second phase is the post-colonial and contemporary planning practices; and the

third phase is urban planning visions and its future. The cross cutting issue among these phases is the urban planning culture that is shaping and reshaped by different urban planning practices, precisely focusing on institutional arrangements, legal frameworks, and community participation. Hence, I argue that urban planning practices in Khartoum are influenced by the practices of different political regimes, planners, and elites who use planning as an instrument to establish their power and engineer a new urban reality that constitutes an integral part of their political and economic ambitions. The paper will employ an operational definition of urban planning taking into consideration that there is a wide range of definitions of urban planning in different fields of studies (e.g. geography, architecture and urban design, urban sociology, etc.). However, to have an empirical grasp of urban planning practices, an operational definition is more suitable for the foreseeable task of this paper. Therefore, urban planning is considered as a complex process, where different social, economic, political, and cultural factors are interwoven. It is the act of shaping and reshaping urban spaces, and this act is guided by different visions, knowledge, experiences, and interests. Thus, it is a complex process due to the involvement of a wide range of actors, who are either individuals or social groups.

## 2 A glimpse of Khartoum

Greater Khartoum, is the capital region of the Sudan, the third largest country on the African continent, with a size of 1,861,484 km<sup>2</sup>. It consists of three major cities, namely, Umdurmān, al-Kharṭoum, and al-Kharṭoum Baḥrī, this is why Greater Khartoum is known as the *Triangular Capital*. The region is divided into seven localities, namely, al-Kharṭoum, al-Kharṭoum Baḥrī, Umdurmān, Sharq an-Nīl, Jabal Awliyā', Umbadda, and Kararī.

Due to the availability of “better” public services, commercial activities, employment opportunities, and security conditions, Greater Khartoum became the destination of a huge number of economic migrants, displaced people, and refugees. Consequently, the capital region witnessed escalation in urban growth rates: population numbers rose from 245,000 in 1956 to 1,343,000 in 1983 and 4,271,000 in 2009 (UNHABITAT, Sudan national report 2014). These developments put resources under high pressure and led to a state of inadequacy, and urban sprawl.

## 3 Early Khartoum

The historical development of Greater Khartoum as the capital region of the Sudan is considered “modern history” in relation to the existence of the Sudan as one country. This does not erase the historical evidences that the region was inhabited long time before considering it to be the head-town. Historical records always refer to the Kingdom of Alawa and its capital Soba<sup>1</sup>, which used

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<sup>1</sup> Currently the name of the extinct civilisation’s capital is reduced to two neighborhoods, though relatively big (i.e. East Soba, and west Soba).

to cover vast areas from what is considered today as Greater Khartoum (Stevenson 1966). The fall of Alawa was followed by the foundation of al-Abdallahb Chieftains, which was located in the area known today by Ḥalfāya al-Mulook<sup>2</sup>. During al- Abdallahb era, the Maḥas migrated to the region and found their settlements on Tuti Island<sup>3</sup> and along the river banks of the Nile and its tributaries (i.e. the Blue and the White Niles, especially along the Blue Nile). However, there is a holy man (locally known as sheikh) called Arbab al-Ajaid was said, as he moved from Tuti Island to be a historical mark in the development of Khartoum. He crossed the Blue Nile to settle on the other side, and built a house and a mosque, which are considered the only signs of permanent construction (Stevenson 1966).

Nonetheless, the Turko-Egyptian<sup>4</sup> conquest played a significant role in the foundation of today's Greater Khartoum. There are three figures in the Turko-Egyptian era who played a huge role in the development of Khartoum. Those figures are Uthmān Bey Jarkas al-Birinji who chose the location of Khartoum after he succeeded Muḥammed Bey al-Dafterdār in 1824. Al-Birinji is known to be the first one who built a mud brick fort. The second figure is Maḥū bey Urfalī, he started the construction of government quarters, which lately known as Ḥikimdāriyya. The third figure is Alī Khūrshīd, who is considered as the first planner of Khartoum. He built a mosque, a barracks, and ordered people to build houses from permanent material. The material used in building Khartoum were the remains of Soba. Shortly after, the city started to grow; a small market place was built; a neighborhood for the rich people was founded, and other neighborhoods inhabited by Sudanese and Egyptians. (Stevenson 1966)

Nonetheless, when al-Mahadi<sup>5</sup> defeated the Turko-Egyptian regime in 1885, he moved the capital to Omdurman and Khartoum was destroyed. Al-Mahadi died in the same year and his successor al-Khalifa (Caliph) Abdullah al-Ta'aishi used the remains of Khartoum to build Omdurman, which was soon transformed into a military camp with a wall surrounding some parts of it. Afterwards, the town started to grow and it contained a few ample streets, a mosque, a market place, premises for himself and his assistants, a treasury, a workshop to coin money, an ammunition store, and a number of neighborhoods (Adil Mustafa Ahmed 2000).

#### **4 Khartoum town planning during the British colonization**

Few years later, the Caliph was defeated by the troops of Herbert Kitchener<sup>6</sup> in the battle of Karari,<sup>7</sup> and in 1899 Sudan become under the Anglo-Egyptian Colonization with Kitchener being the Governor-General. One of the first assignments he commanded was to move the capital city

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<sup>2</sup> Currently, it is a neighborhood located in Khartoum North.

<sup>3</sup> A landlocked Island located at the junction of the Blue Nile and the White Nile in the centre of Greater Khartoum.

<sup>4</sup> The Turko-Egyptian era is when Sudan was under the rule of the Uthmān Empire (1821-1885)

<sup>5</sup> Muhammed Ahmed al-Mahadi is the founder of the Mahadiyya State in Sudan (1885-1889)

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Kitchener is a senior officer and a colonial administrator who led the British army in their mission of colonising Sudan.

<sup>7</sup> Also known as the battle of Omdurman.

from Omdurman back to Khartoum. It was very important for the colonial powers to control the spatial forms and functions of their towns by designing new ones or re-planning existing cities. The main purposes behind this, as Njoh (2007) states, was to grip over the colonized, to facilitate plundering, and to assert the “supremacy” of the European power. Njoh views are compatible with the views of Home who explicates how the early colonial town planning of Khartoum is a classic example of colonial town planners imposing their plans and creating cities that only serves their welfare, or as he phrased it ‘alien urban forms’ (Robert Home 1990:4). Using sketches drawn by Kitchener, Khartoum was rebuilt, new roads were paved, and some open spaces were added to the cityscape. Kitchener’s attempts to set the layout of Khartoum was a characteristic of the initial period of colonial urban planning in Africa, when it was the responsibility of the military personnel (Silva 2015). Nevertheless, Kitchener left Sudan at the end of 1899 and was succeeded by Sir Francis Reginald Wingate.<sup>8</sup>

When discussing the history of urban planning in Khartoum, Sir William McLean is one of the influential figures. He was a civil engineer working on several major infrastructure projects in Glasgow, and he was also a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers in 1903 (Home 1990). He came to Sudan in 1906 and held the position of Municipal Engineer for Khartoum. When McLean arrived, the population of Khartoum was 25,000, Omdurman was 60,000 and Khartoum North was 20,000. His main task was to plan a city for the wellbeing of the new white settlers: constructing roads, building a sewage system, constructing a tramway, and designing residential areas that accommodate the stratification of the new emerging society (Home 1990).

The following quotation is a paragraph from a paper McLean presented at the town planning conference in London in 1910:

“Someday Khartoum will be the largest town in Africa, and amongst things, the centre of an enormous cotton trade, for the Sudan is capable of supplying most of the cotton that Lancashire can take, and the town has been planned with an eye on that” (McLean 1980: 138).

This quotation echoes the point Njoh was making, on the fact that colonial cities are constructed to control resources. King (1990) demonstrates that the colonial cities are planned to be extensions of a ‘metropolitan space economy’, and the urban stratifications that develops and urban architectural forms are dependent on the role of the colonial city, which has a main task of organizing the production of raw materials for the metropole.

Another quotation for McLean from the same paper saying:

“The Sudanese native villages immediately to the south outside the old fortifications were built to accommodate the natives who had been living previously amid the ruins of the old Khartoum. In this way an attempt was made to segregate the native population, a very desirable arrangement, more especially from a sanitary standpoint, as

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<sup>8</sup> Governor-General of Sudan during the British Colonial era (1899 -1916).

the epidemics to which all tropical cities are liable can be so much more easily dealt with." (McLean 1980: 139)

This quotation reflects how town planning was targeting the welfare of the new European settlers, who demanded an environment that made their stay easier and pleasant. After learning a lesson from what accrued in the Indian port cities of Calcutta and Bombay (Okpala 2009), the health concerns were one of the main drivers of urban planning at that time, especially in Anglophone Africa in order to eliminate any chance of epidemic diseases. A common discourse of hygiene and public health was used to justify the layout of the town, especially segregating the natives and putting them in a third-class urban residential area (Mabin / Smit 1997; Myers 2003; Robinson 1990). For example, the prevention of malaria (Frenkel / Western 1988) shows that urban planners segregated Europeans from natives in residence, leaving them in horrible health conditions, while protecting the European ruling class. The legacy of colonial urban planning was produced cities that are described as racially segregated (Hannerz 1983; Nightingale 2006). McLean's plan was not so different, the main outlines of the plan was to locate the houses and offices of the ruling class, align the Nile Avenue. The houses were spacious with big gardens, entrance and exit roads, an efficient sewer system, and sufficient water and power supply.

During that time, some wealthy merchants and business men came to Khartoum to establish their businesses, as the city was growing, it became a fertile area for successful business. In addition, there were the Egyptian officers who came with Kitchener's campaign and settled in Khartoum. These two groups also needed to be considered in the emerging town plan. Finally, the Sudanese native class had also been considered in McLean's town plan. He introduced the Land Class System, where the first-class residential plots are reserved for the British officers and their families, second class plots were for the wealthy merchants and Egyptian officers, and finally the segregated neighborhoods or the native lodged areas as third-class plots for the natives (McLean 1980). This plan was no doubt reflecting the dominance of the European Superiority. However, the neighborhood classification system is functioning up to date, and urban residential plots are allocated and managed accordingly, although racial segregation is no longer the main driver behind it (Bannaga 2010).

The two other segments of Greater Khartoum (i.e. Omdurman and Khartoum North) were not considered in McLean's Plan. Regarding Omdurman, it was left completely to the natives. Concerning Khartoum North, it started to grow, due to the dockyard and the railhead that was built to go up to Egypt. Another place that was left untouched was Tuti Island, which was seen as a small autonomous agricultural community. Khartoum's physical layout reflected colonial ethnocentrism, and when McLean left Sudan in 1913, he left behind a beloved enclave for the European settlers and their affiliates, and a place of alienation, segregation, and injustice for the "natives" (Home 1990).

The town planning principles, introduced by McLean in 1908, remained unchanged for nearly 40 years, yet, the administrative bodies for Khartoum town planning were shifting (Bushra Babiker 2003). In 1937, Khartoum Town Planning Committee was established by the Governor-General,

and its task was to give him advice, on issues regarding the town planning and land utilization in Khartoum (Haywood 1985). It was mainly focusing on the design of the three townscapes, providing amenities and maintaining the existing ones that takes into consideration public health demands, and any issues that are related to planning public spaces, gardens residential areas, places for leisure activities, business hubs, and places of worship (Adil Mustafa Ahmed 2000). In 1947 the Central Town Planning Board (CTPB) was founded. Later all the administrative transactions regarding town planning were shifted to it. In addition to, the Judicial Secretary office established a small department for village and town planning to supplement CTPB (Haywood 1985). In 1950 the *Town Re-planning Act* was issued, which focus on improving towns' conditions, through constructing roads, upgrading residential areas, and creating public spaces.

According to Home (1997), a mixed, agricultural, commercial, and industrial economy was the backbone of the British colonial empire. Therefore, they were the ones who highly invested in infrastructure, namely bridges, roads, railways, housing and public services. They also didn't exclusively rely on public institutions to manage the economies but they encouraged private companies to come and invest. Mahmood Mamdani (1996) stated that the British colonial administration had the upper hand in establishing authoritarian ideas in the local cultures of their colonies. This is exactly where the native population came together and formed different ethnic cohorts known as 'tribes', indulging communities into deep division that served the purpose of 'divide and rule'.

## 5 Post-colonial Khartoum

In 1956 the Sudan gained its independence and the government structure was reformed. Consequently, urban planning administrative bodies were restructured. The department of Town and Village Planning was relocated in the emerging Ministry of Local Government, and all the responsibilities of the Central Town Planning Board were reduced. The status of urban planning radically changed when the Ministry of Housing was established in 1969 and the policies of decentralization were introduced. Subsequently, some authorities were granted to governors and popular executive councils of provinces. Adil Mustafa Ahmed (2000) names this era as the 'de-planning' of Khartoum.

Khartoum is drastically expanding, old neighborhoods are becoming dense, new ones are added to the map, and IDP camps are appearing. Different urban plans have been introduced, as well as different patterns of expansion that reflects conflicting ideologies, which makes the city appears chaotic. Today, Khartoum is expanding in all directions, swallowing the neighbouring villages and the surrounding rural livelihoods. The huge numbers of migrants Khartoum started receiving, especially after 1984-85, is inconceivable. Settling at the edge of the city, those inhabitants came with different praxis, values, and beliefs, which founded different urban realities that created ruptures with the colonial urbanism, especially for those who are nostalgic to what they describe as organised, clean, efficient, and tolerant. Although some regulations that works close to urban planning, such as land laws, did note in principle witnessed major reforms (Wekwete 1995;

Berrisford and Kihato 2006), but in terms of practice these laws are interpreted and appropriated in different ways by different actors, which diverge from what colonial urban planner intended to. Khartoum by no means has radically been disconnected from its colonial past, and it will never be the same again.

For further illustration, the example of The Land Registry Office in Sudan is part of the judiciary since 1909, and it consists of a central office in Khartoum, known as the Registrar General Department. The department is headed by a judge from the high court, and from branch offices in different regional states under the regional judiciary. The office runs task of land property conveying, title registration, and deed registration according to the laws of 1925, which were slightly reformed in 1985 (Land Department Registration Laws 1925-1985). Although the laws have been reformed, the ultimate authority given by these laws to the registrar general remains the same (an interview with an officer from the land registry officer in 2013). However, and according to one of the people who are waiting in the line to register his land he was complaining how it is chaotic to come and register a land title "I don't know where to start and where to end, everything is chaotic and everyone here works on their own terms, no institutionalisation" (a client at the land registry office, 2013).

## **6 Different actors - different plans**

Over years, the city has been subject to different urban planning experiments. For more than sixty years of independence, planning cultural-scape is shifting towards different ideologies, interests, and practices. All successive regimes had urban planning visions that shaped the physical plans they generated. Urban Planning projects designed in post-independence Sudan are mainly collaborations between the planning authorities and international consultancies. Transnational Companies such as Doxiadis, a Greek consultancy, planned two major plans, one in 1959 and the other in 1999, which was co-planned with Moneim Mustafa Company (a Sudanese consultancy). Another example is MEFIT, an Italian consultancy, who also planned two master plans for Khartoum, one in 1977 and the second one in 2007 called KPPP5 or Khartoum Structural Plan. KPPP5 is the last structural plan that is still functioning as a reference to any physical restructuring processes in Khartoum. The complexity added to urban planning processes in Khartoum through international collaborations (Lagae / Avermaete 2010; Raedt 2014; Silva 2015) had led to a great rupture with the colonial past. These structural plans are mostly informed by different urban realities than the ones existing in Khartoum. During the colonial times, the urban reality that informed the colonial urban planning was the domination of the colonial powers which perfectly worked and served the purpose. These plans are considered to be far from those who are living in the city today. They are only fancy maps that remain on the shelves of the planning authorities.

## 7 Urban planning post independence challenges

In his article “The Politics of Urban Planning in the Sudan” Post (1996) attempted to understand the political aspects that have great influence on planning practices. His main idea is to evaluate the poor performance of urban planning in Sudan through its environment, represented in the context where the plans are designed, and the processes of decision making and implementation. His definition of urban planning is more of government interventions in the development of cities, but not limited to physical planning. However, his analysis is useful to understand the general political environment where urban planning is nested. The economic and political instability (i.e. the civil war and starvation that hit most south regions in 1980s) played a huge role in the failure of urban planning projects, in addition to weak planning institutions, issues of corruption and clientelism, and elitism (Post 1995; Pantuliano et al. 2011). Especially elitism, which refers to the views of some elitist minority groups on the modality of arranging urban public spaces that reflects their “modernization” notion accompanied with more focus on beautification, without considering daily urban practices of the city dwellers. Moreover, politics of expediency, which refers to the fact that urban planning decision-making is more politically based than technically, led to many planning catastrophes.

## 10 Khartoum structural plan KPP5

“The Khartoum master plan, while harmonizing the diversities into a higher unity, will save all the different qualities that come from a long history and an exceptional nature. The challenge is to allow central activities locations to be developed not only in the very center of the town but also along the main structural and infrastructural axis giving shape, in this way, to a complex but open system of strategic functions distributed at interstate, state and local level.” (Khartoum Structural Plan 2007:1)

In August 2007, the State Ministry of Urban Planning and Public Utilities signed a contract with MEFIT to design a 25 years Master Plan for the Capital Region. Khartoum State department formed a supreme committee, from a number of experts in the field of urban planning, to observe the implementation process (Khartoum Structural Plan Implementation Unit interviews, July 15, 2013). The supreme committee is divided to several sub-committees, and everyone is responsible of a particular field, as they provide their specific visions, the challenges facing the “development” of Khartoum State, and their suggestions to solve these problems.

Accordingly, there is a women Committee and it asserts that Khartoum State lacks women centers with high quality services, which includes women social clubs, centers for vocational training and income generation (Interviews, July 23, 2013).

The security committee pointed to squatter settlements as one of the main problems that put the security of the city at risk. Their vision is to transform all the squatter settlements to popular residences, to move the army barracks - which is now used as a dormitory for female students at

University of Khartoum - from the center, and to relocate the grand educational and public service institutions to the city's outskirts. In addition, they recommended to build canals that surround Khartoum State, with a limited number of entrances and exits, and to develop public services in rural areas (Interviews, July 23, 2013).

The committee for people with special needs stated that one of the main problems of urban planning in the Sudan is failing to consider the needs of this social group, or providing them with special facilities, and services. They recommend that the right for this group to have their facilities should be guaranteed by laws and regulations to make sure they will not be overtaken, and to make them accessible (Interviews, July 23, 2013).

The committee for upgrading the countryside of Khartoum state concluded that the most important problem is environmental degradation, the increasing rates of poverty, urban sprawl, lack of planning and land registration, result in the loss of land ownership. They also explain that villages are fertile land for the mushrooming of informal housing, and they endorsed the provision of necessary information to draw an integral plan that improves the infrastructure in the rural areas and decreasing the rate of migration to the city. They suggested to support agricultural activities, founding strict regulations to control urban sprawl, to register the villages and the agricultural land, and to develop rural areas. The concentration of public services in the capital region attracts migration especially from war torn zones and famine, and the lack of regulations that control migration to Khartoum. They suggest the importance to provide equal access to public services in all regions, and found regulations that control peoples' movements into and out of the capital region (Interviews, July 23, 2013).

The Urban Land Use Committee pointed to the fact that water fronts are not utilized, lack of public and private parking in the three towns, land ownership (freehold), which hinders the upgrading processes, people do not follow building regulations, and overtaking public spaces. Poor public service provision is one of the main concerns of the Land utilization committee (Interviews, July 23, 2013)

The environment Committee called for protecting vegetation, decreasing Nile water pollution, and preserving the local heritage. The important steps to take, according to the committee's recommendation, is to conduct research on the population growth and to compare it with the available resources with regards to environmental dimensions, and to preserve the historical places, or places with significant architectural style. Moreover, to enhance aesthetics by following one architectural style in building that is extracted from the natural and cultural environment, and planting green belts (Interviews, July 23, 2013).

The Committee for Improving the Social and Cultural Life pointed to the problems created by displacement, massive waves of refugees, street children (known as *al-Shammaasa*), and lack of public toilets in places with high population density. They recommended to improve infrastructure and social services to encourage city beautification at the residential level, establishing a body that monitors the implementation of the structural plan, and protecting public

spaces inside the neighborhoods. They recommended especial programs to motivate people who are living in different neighborhoods by rewarding them, and maintain an efficient transportation system (Interviews, July 23, 2013).

The Poverty Eradication Committee shed light on problems of unemployment, the limitation in the work of Community Based Organizations regarding the urban poor, lack of housing options, lack of public participation in decision making, and discounting the informal sector. The proper solution lays in designing and implementing development projects, creating more jobs, introducing low cost housing, focusing on transformative industry, implementing the Federal System, fighting corruption, allowing the urban poor to participate in decision making, and founding CBOs (community based organizations) that help the poor (Interviews 2013).

KPP5 is part of a comprehensive structural plan that includes five main levels: National, Regional, Contact Areas, Rural, and Urban. It is based on physical planning perspectives, which focus on the national strategies for land utilization, existing social systems, the population density, transportation strategies, and environmental regulations. It requires development of all the states that compose the Sudan, to reduce migration to the capital region, diminish the pressure on public services, and end land encroachment. Therefore, in the twenty-five coming years - beginning from 2008 - nine regional cities will be chosen as main regional hubs. A special strategy is directed towards the contact areas where neighbouring states put a lot of pressure on Khartoum. This strategy includes economic projects that creates job opportunities, and providing public services. The areas that are identified as rural Khartoum, will be re-planned to absorb the population growth, by creating housing schemes and improving transportation networks. Urban restructuring is based on preventing more horizontal expansion of the city, drawing the boundaries of the urban area, and focusing on intensification (vertical expansion) as a strategy for land utilization.

The demarcation of the urban area will be by a ring-road that links al-Halfaya Bridge, Soba Bridge and Um Haraz Bridge. Three processes the plan adopted to rearrange the urban area, which are redistribution, rehabilitation, and upgrading.

The redistribution process is for the places where land use no longer suits the surrounding urban environment, and those places are namely, the military areas, the current international airport, the old main public hospitals in the center, and ministries and government institutions in the center. The military institutions will be relocated in the areas proposed for defense and security, which are the Far East and West sides of the state. The government institutions and ministries will be redistributed between the three cities as a short-term procedure, and later - after the construction of the international airport south Omdurman - they will all be moved in one compound next to the new airport. The old public hospitals will be distributed to the new proposed urban centers along the ring road (Interviews, July 23, 2013).

The rehabilitation process is targeting places such as the industrial areas, the old airport, the waterfronts, the space between the Nile Avenue and al-Jamhuriyya Avenue, the railway station,

and Omdurman Market. The industrial areas will be commercial and industrial hubs. The space between the Nile Avenue and al-Jamhuriyya Avenue will be an open space with pedestrians, and a recreational area, for youth and tourists. The Railway station will be transformed to a public park, and the railways will only pass by. The waterfronts will be places for residential buildings, resorts, and open green spaces. Omdurman market will have more open spaces, wide streets, shading, and lighting (Interviews, July 23, 2013).

The Upgrading process is targeting the historical and cultural areas, founding green spaces, graveyards, the junction of the Blue and the White Niles, and Tuti Island. Historical and cultural buildings will be transformed to places for cultural tourism. The green spaces will be determined by their ability to facilitate environmental development. The graveyards will be expanded to accommodate the number of death in fifty years. The junction of the Blue and the White Nile, will be a public park and a view tower that will be one of the important land marks, and it will be an international touristic site (Interviews, July 23, 2013).

## **11 A future for whom?**

Post 2005 many African governments came together to discuss frameworks for a new vision for African cities, the addressed urban challenges at a continental level, to draft pan-African urban planning policies (Silva 2015). However Urban Planning in Sudan, especially after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 that stopped a chronic civil war, different international forces were stepping into the urban planning scenery. Qatar, China, Malesia, Saudi Arabia, are United Arab Emirates, playing a huge role in the direction of urban planning in the past 15 years. In 2005 Khartoum hosted The Capital of Arab Culture festival, which reflected a lean from the government towards an Arab cultural orientation, and efforts from the city municipality to beautify the city took indeed that path, to please the visitors who are coming to attend the festival. This was followed by several bilateral agreements to develop Khartoum and transform into the “modern” frontage of the Sudan. The example of water front’s projects designed constructed by Diyar (an international design and construction company from Qatar), reflects the Arab ethnocentrism and this is leading Khartoum into an era of Neo-colonialism. Consequently, and urban practices that does not fit the Arab framework and the ‘Dohaisation’ or the ‘Dubiaisation’ (Choplin / Franck 2010) of Khartoum is dumped in the category of informality of urban practices.

A recent report released by the Supreme Council for Strategic Planning, reflects what they labelled as “negative practices in Khartoum”, one of them is, encroaching on public streets, showing that there are many negative practices that affect the public order, create congestion, and make Khartoum less attractive for foreign investment. People in different neighborhoods build extra fences and cover them with straws called *zareeba*, especially when the houses are small, to create more room in the house. Especially during electricity cut off, the houses become very hot and the dwellers need to be in a place where ventilation is better.

This is considered encroachment by the state authorities' standards. A house owner was very angry after his *zareeba* was demolished. He said, referring to the Inspection and Building Monitoring Unit, "they did not even respect the plants, with their bulldozers they came and swiped everything off, then they should make sure the electricity supply is efficient" (Interview, August 2, 2013). Another example of encroachment are shopkeepers displaying their merchandises, or small crafts that are occupying main roads (e.g. the smoke bath<sup>9</sup> wood and pottery production along the Nile Avenue in Omdurman, street vendors in open areas, tin lizzie junkyards kept by the owners in front of their houses.

On one hand, these scenes from the daily practices of city dwellers are considered informalities that distort the view of the city. On the other hand, mega urban projects and investment to transform the face of the capital are often a detriment of the environment. One example is al-Mogran development project, a grandiose high-rise complex that will include a large golf course, a first-class residential area, and a business district.

This project alone is expected to consume around 2.3m liters of water every day. The development will also encroach on the Sunut forest<sup>10</sup>, a reserve protected by law. The case is currently being debated in a State Court (Pantuliano et al. 2011). Therefore, the project had stopped, leaving huge distortion of two buildings in the middle of a huge construction site.

## 12 Conclusion

Colonial Urban Plans in Khartoum were ruptured throughout time, when the objectives and actors were changing. The structures installed by the British planners are gradually removed, there is no longer a tropical climate health argument but a contemporary urban society embedded within structures of capitalism and Neo-colonialism. The characteristics of this mode of urbanism are driven from global social, economic, political, and cultural forces, and institutional arrangements that construct capitalist societies. In turn, urban planning is a social phenomenon, embedded in urbanisation that occurs in capitalist societies. The reality of contemporary urbanisation has the upper hand in forming urban planning as an essential social activity (Scott /Roweis 1977). The current patterns of living in Khartoum are also reflecting a particular case of a city being in the margins of Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the margins of the Arab world. However, this exceptionality does not erase the possibility of an urban planning debate that is based on the contradicting images of formality in informality in urban practices. On the contrary, it can develop more theoretical and empirical findings on how to research and theorize African Urban realities.

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<sup>9</sup> The smoke bath is a beauty practice among married Sudanese women, they use particular types of wood. Then they dig a hole in the ground of their back yards and put a clay pot inside. They light up the wood and put it inside the clay pot, and they put on top of the hole a mat made from palm leaf and opened from the middle to let the smoke come out of the hole. The women cover themselves with a blanket and sit close to the hole while stretching their legs over the opening of the whole so the smoke can cover ever part of their bodies. This practice is said to give them a soft skin, nice yellowish color, and a good smell.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Sunut Forest is a natural reserve, located on the White Nile banks, on the Khartoum side.

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