Content

Preface

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Urban agglomerations in Africa are among the most astonishing places in the world. Characterized by outstanding growth rates, these places are also known for being chaotic, dangerous, or at least a challenge for everyday life. Whereas many urban settlements in Africa are classified as slums by UN-Habitat, cities in Africa are fertile places for arts and among the best connected ones in matters of communication, circulation of goods and migration.

This book aims to tackle these contradictions not by looking at cities as static and coherent structures, but through the perspectives of the people living in them. It focusses on the life-worlds of the city dwellers whose experiences and expectations are very often linked to movements and mobility. By adopting a comprehensive understanding of urban life in Africa, the book endeavours to gain a new and broader understanding of how these places are locally constituted and – simultaneously – connected to other places. Throughout all contributions, the dynamics of urban life-worlds and their role in embedding the experiences of the city dwellers into local realities are evident. We do not claim to present a solution as to how the conundrum of contradicting notions might be put together to form a coherent image of cities in Africa. By adopting the perspective of those concerned, we rather aim at showing how life-worlds are experienced and how the urbanites' different perspectives constitute the puzzle of cities in Africa.

Introduction

Urban Life-Worlds in Motion

Hans Peter Hahn

Dynamics of the Urban in Africa

Cities in Africa are experiencing highly dynamic growth and they are attracting people to an outstanding degree. If it is true that the future and past of any society are closely related to each other, then it is even more important to consider urban life as a particular and complex setting of cultural and economic phenomena. Cities played a salient role in the history of many countries in Africa in pre-colonial times and throughout the period of colonialism (Genova 2005), particularly during the years of the independence movements (Coquery-Vidrovitsch 1991). Obviously, they have also played a significant role since independence. Urban cultures will also be highly relevant for the future due to their creativity and innovative character. This also applies to the perception of societies in Africa beyond the spatial limits of the continent and to their contribution to the so-called global community.

Most of the contributions in this book originate from a panel of the same title at the VAD (Vereinigung der Afrikanisten in Deutschland, Association of Africanists in Germany) conference, 'Continuities and Dislocations: Fifty Years of African Independence', held in Mainz in April 2010 and jointly organized by the author and Kristin Kastner. Among the reasons why the perspective on urban life-worlds is combined here with motion, movement and mobility is that these count among the most important fea-

tures of the recent history of cities in Africa. On a global scale, cities in Africa are the fastest growing urban centres worldwide (Swiaczny 2005). In contrast to South Asian cities, which likewise have similar growth rates, the dynamic in Africa is not the result of a direct governmental impact, centralised planning or an official policy, but rather the consequence of spontaneous and very often unplanned population movements. The growth of cities in Africa is much higher than the demographic increase of these countries in general, which indicates that it must be based on migration from the villages to the cities, and not just on the increase of urban populations through reproduction.

The focus of this book is on mobile urban life-worlds and the wide range of different movements which are constitutive of the shape of cities. The book deals with movement within the inner city as well as from rural areas to the cities. Furthermore, there is considerable mobility between cities. Individuals who take part in inter-urban mobility often have a high professional profile and are seeking new fields of activities in other cities. Movement is also relevant for those people who live in a city in Africa but expect to be leaving the continent and emigrating to Europe or the USA. Although for such people the city is just an intermediate place on their itinerary, they provide an important contribution to the mobile character of urban life-worlds. As the contributions to this volume illustrate, the different forms of mobility and movement are helping shape the image of cities in Africa (Beauchemin and Bocquier 2004).

From a cultural anthropological perspective, the issues of urban societies and their ethnography have been a somewhat neglected topic (Horn 1989; Wildner 1995). This becomes clear when one examines the issues of the journal *Urban Anthropology*, which was established in 1972 but faded approximately ten years later (Al-Zubaidi 1998). However, cities in Africa represent an exception to the problematic disengagement of anthropology from the field of urban studies. As early as the 1950s, the towns of the so-called *copper belt* in southern Africa (Zambia, Zimbabwe and other nations), but also some cities in West Africa like Lagos and Freetown, were important fields of ethnographic research. Back then, anthropologists were mainly interested in the migration of men and women from rural areas to the cities. It is not unreasonable to argue that anthropologists actually accompanied their subjects of study on their way from the villages along the new roads into the cities, where many new job opportunities had been cre-

ated and new life-styles waited to be discovered by the former villagers (Ferguson 1992; Moore 1994: 67-73).

The simultaneous character of inherited social institutions (often labelled 'traditional'), in particular those that regulate kinship networks and the so-called 'modern' practices which seemed to dominate social life in the cities, led to a critique of some widespread contemporaneous assumptions concerning cultural change. Empirical findings revealed that the rural-urban migrants were able to tie together both life-worlds: that of the village and that of the towns. They did so at the individual level of their biographies, that is, by movement, in particular by travelling back and forth between their villages of origin and the city (Gutkind 1965; Gugler 1971). The presupposition repeatedly articulated by the colonial administration – and sometimes even by anthropologists (Skinner 1974) – that it would be necessary for migrants to abandon their traditions in order to come to terms with the standards of urban life proved to be wrong. In fact, several studies of the new urbanites' social life did show how the mobile members of urban societies had been able to create new practices and new social institutions. Through these new practices, traditions and urban structures were integrated in a creative manner (Cohen 1969; Epstein 1961; Mitchell 1956; Mitchell and Epstein 1959).

During the 1960s, this debate had a considerable impact on the sociology of the city on a more general level. The main aspect, namely why these ethnographic studies were able to pave the way for an improved theoretical framework, was related to the acknowledgement of cultural diversity within the towns. As was evident in studies of cities like Lusaka or Lagos, men and women were living simultaneously in several social and culturally divergent networks, one related to their traditions, the culture of origin and the place of birth, others to their neighbourhoods and to the contexts of their professional lives. The mere theoretical aspect of this debate affects the question of whether this link between the different worlds was permanent in character, or whether the intermingling was due to migrants' specific situations and therefore merely of an ephemeral and non-permanent character. One of the noteworthy outcomes of this debate was the recognition of similarities between US-American cities and those in Africa, particularly with regard to their rapid growth and their capacity to host a wide range of different cultures (Otiso and Owusu 2008).

New Approaches to the Study
of Urban Life-Worlds in Africa

In the following, it is not intended to reanimate these old debates. Although the intellectual objective of the contributions to this book is related to the aforementioned findings of earlier ethnographic approaches to the city in Africa, it is suggested that there are at least two new and complementary aspects that constitute innovative approaches to a better understanding of urban life-worlds and that allow the phenomena related to mobility and movement in the urban context to be grasped in a more differentiated way.

One of these approaches is the concept of transnationalism, which has increasingly been acknowledged during the last fifteen years. Based on studies of men and women of Caribbean origin who currently live in New York, Nina Glick Schiller (1992) and others (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003; Vertovec 2009) have shown that these migrants maintain transnational networks characterized by the engagement of particular people at the place of origin and specific 'fields of social action' at both places, that of origin and that of the migrants' destination. An important example of these 'fields of social action' is the organization of funerals (Mazzucato and Kabki 2006). Also the professional fields of action that provide the basis for economic survival at both places receive greater awareness in recent studies. This can be illustrated by the activities of transnational individuals related to mobile telephony and communication centres (Hackenbroich and Vöckler 2007; Paragas 2005). On a more general level, transnational networks do have a direct impact on urban life-worlds in so far as mobile people find places and niches in cities like New York, London and Paris. They do not limit their activities to economic survival but also articulate their esteem for their cultures and societies of origin. Furthermore, it is obvious that these networks are based on kinship. Remittances made by individuals from the place of destination to their parents or children they have left behind constitute one of the crucial aspects of these networks (Nieswand 2009).

The concept of transnationalism is not only important for the understanding of social networks of migrants and their economic activities; it is also relevant for an appropriate description of urban life-worlds. Mobile individuals in a city who maintain permanent ties to places elsewhere provide a particular contribution to the city's image or, more precisely, to its speci-

ficity. The impact of these individuals and groups consists of cultural, so-
cial and economic practices which refer to the remote place. At the very
same time, these aspects become part of the city's image. Investigations of
the transnational relations of urbanites should start with actors like mobile
individuals and groups that have a particular influence on urban life-worlds
(Smith 2005). On the methodological level this requires a broadened per-
spective, which must not be restricted to the logic of a single nation or city.
The call for a spatial extension of the field of study might be the most im-
portant contribution of the concept of transnationalism to the study of urban
life-worlds. It would be misleading to confine a city to a spatially delimited
object dominated by only one culture and one nation. Instead, cities are al-
ways composed of a wide range of identities and belongings (Smith 2001;
Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009). Thus, a more careful examination of the
biographies of the mobile lives is required. This will also bring these people
into the focus of analysis. Their meaningful ties stretching beyond the spa-
tial context of their current life-worlds and its time frame need to be inte-
grated into urban studies.

A second approach that is closely related to this conceptual framework
also transgresses the limited perspective in older debates on the ethnogra-
phy of particular spatially confined urban societies. It deals with images of
the city that are important for the self-understandings of people living in
urban contexts. Generally speaking, the images of cities in Africa that cir-
culate in the media reflect a highly ambivalent evaluation of these places.
On the one hand, they are associated with the fastest growing societies
worldwide and are considered to be hotbeds of creativity (UN-Habitat
2003). There are no other places worldwide that are exposed to such explic-
it expectations of innovation with regard to political and social develop-
ments (Koolhaas and van der Haak 2005). Cities in Africa are perceived to
be of increasing relevance as centres of modern art and exhibitions. In some
cases, like Dakar (Dak'art), Ouagadougou (FESPACO) and Johannesburg
(Biennale), they are already playing an important role in the global dis-
course on new forms of art (Vincent 2005).

On the other hand, cities in Africa are represented in the global media
as hotspots of violence and misery. This refers in particular to sites of civil
war (Mogadiscio, N'Djamena, Abidjan, Freetown and others). Cities in Af-
rica are also burdened with their unbearable mismanagement with regard to
infrastructure, for example, the decay of the congested roads, the deficient

water supply or the malfunctioning of waste disposal. This deplorable state of affairs has led some authors to the general assumption that all cities in Africa are merely slums and that any further growth will lead to a worsening of their living conditions (Davis 2006; Pieterse 2008).

The contradiction between cities' quite high esteem – as creative places – and the repeated reference to their existential deficits should be read as an indicator of an inadequate and fragmented understanding of urban life-worlds in Africa as such. Against the background of these contradictions, the current challenge for a more appropriate description is to provide a more consistent basis for an understanding of urban places and societies. This basis requires linking expectations and disappointments, experiences of creativity and experiences of despair (Murray and Myers 2007).

To manage this challenge, the focus on mobility and movement appears to be particularly helpful, because it refers to the experiences and expectations of many urban dwellers. Thus, cities are intermediate places that represent a transitory stage for many of its inhabitants. These people's biographies refer to the rural contexts or other cities from which they came. At the very same time, cities are places where people stay in order to prepare for the next step in a journey which might lead to another city on the continent, or to a place beyond the African continent. Future places, destinations of intended journeys, are also important for many people in cities. In sum, urban life-worlds are not spatially or culturally confined places, but rather segments in broader networks that link them to other cities, countries, cultures and societies. In the framework of this expanded understanding, the city might therefore be approached as an 'invisible city' since many links exist beyond the immediate horizon of perception (De Boeck and Plissart 2004).

This kind of contextualization, which does not prioritize any direct link to a single place or image, has quite concrete consequences for the understanding of urban life-worlds. Cities in Africa are full of references to forms of urbanity and life-styles, which can be associated with European, US or Asian cities (Malaquais 2004; Weiss 2002, 2009). Mobility, in this context, does not just address the question of factual access to other cities, places and urban cultures. Mobility, in this extended definition, is a technique to make particular use of names, practices and images associated with these towns on other continents and to create associations and ties (Salazar 2010; Syed 2007). This notion of mobility has an outstanding relevance,

reaching far beyond the urban life-worlds in Africa, and it explains the 'African' character of some *quartiers* in Paris and New York (Copeland-Carson 2004; MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000; Stoller 2002).

Obviously it is not unproblematic to associate globally circulating images with a life-world which can still be located in Africa (Garcia Canclini 1995; Nutall 2004). Any exclusive or privileged link to an 'African character' (whatever that might mean) of the life-worlds described here should be denied. The very idea of 'not having a purely African character' may contribute to the perception of these urban life-worlds as highly dynamic and vital. Furthermore, it is precisely the affirmative attitude regarding this hybrid character and the often enthusiastic appreciation of cultural phenomena from all parts of the world that generate the power for cities' momentum of expansion. It is justified to call this a 'hybrid character' because the combination of different sources is explicitly confirmed and regarded as an appealing feature of these images. Against the background of this hybrid character, cities in Africa should not be understood as devices of (cultural) integration, but merely as heterogeneous, expanding and sometimes aggressive entities (Behrens 2007).

Recently there has been a more theoretically inspired debate over whether transnational communities can be associated with a concept of 'locality' at all. Some authors argue that, in spite of their transnational character, there is a struggle over power that defines the superior relevance of locality (Lentz 2000; Smith 2005). Others define the 'transnational community' in a more complex way and insist on the intermingling of interests and power between different levels. Locality could then only be identified through a process of 'scaling', where the local is the bottom end of the scalar effect, which includes translocal and transnational phenomena (Levitt 1999; Glick Schiller 2005). Although the contributions to this book do not claim to provide the final argument in this debate, the notion of the life-world focuses on perceptions and avoids unnecessary spatial definitions.

One consequence of the focus on transgressing boundaries and self-consciously adopting new cultural elements from different parts of the world is the difficulty in delimiting cities in Africa spatially. Cities in Africa grow at such a speed that it is often unclear whether a particular settlement is part of the city or not. Thus, the study of the peri-urban has become

a field in its own right, investigating the question of specific contributions by these 'in-between' areas of urban life (Drechsel, Graefe and Fink 2007).

The territoriality of cities in Africa has not only become questionable due to their rapid growth: the difficulty of delimiting a city is also linked to the problem of identifying a 'centre'. Very often, a given city has several centres, depending on whether economic activities, cultural life or traffic are considered the dominant criteria. But, even if such a scale is defined, peripheral places have sometimes very quickly turned into central locations, while old city centres may lose their relevance (Heeg 2008). Therefore, these different dynamics allow one to refer to the deterritorialization of cities, as it becomes impossible to delimit the space and structure of the urban in Africa (Guèye and Fall 2005; Boesen and Marfaing 2007).

FURTHER METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

In order to provide an adequate framework that includes the two complementary approaches mentioned above, a specific methodology is needed. Methods developed in transnational studies (network analysis and biographical enquiries) should be combined with appropriate ways of documenting and analysing imaginations and images of the city.

These two aspects can only be related to each other through in-depth studies on a micro-scale. The aim should be to highlight the entanglement of people and places without neglecting the meaningful aspects linking these people to other places. The most promising approach here is phenomenology, which makes it possible to link the immediate character of a situated perception with the chronologically deeper horizons of past experiences (Waldenfels 1997). Compared to other approaches, the phenomenological perspective also manages to grasp the current and intended mobility in urban life-worlds in concrete contexts (Pelican and Tatah 2009). An example of this is the detailed documentation of the moments of the departure and arrival of migrants (Klute and Hahn 2007). In these moments the hidden dimensions of mobility become clear. This refers not only to the persons who actually migrate, but also to the families and others present at the moment of bidding goodbye or welcome.

Moreover, a phenomenological approach has the advantage of detaching the experience of movement from the present and linking it to experi-

ences connected with movements in someone's life history. Being mobile, having the experience of moving from one place to another, is part of the biographies of many urbanites. A phenomenological perspective may also include a detailed description of moving along a street. Sounds, lights and impressions of other mobile people in the street result in a specific perception of what the character of a street is (Kusenbach 2003). Phenomenology more generally suggests that motion is the combined outcome of the bodily experience of 'being on the move' and the biographical dimension, i.e. embodying the experience of past migrations (Kastner 2010). Both of them refer to the level of the individual as well as to the expectations of the social environment, as has been stressed by the notion of the 'migratory project' (Boyer 2005).

Within this framework, it is important to consider the wide range of different rhythms of movement. In the case of urban dwellers, movement can be observed on their daily trip from a place outside town or from a peripheral sector to the city's centre, a path that is travelled in both directions on the same day. Movement can also consist of periods of stasis when someone is preparing for the moment when he will have the means and contacts required to engage in labour migration. Other movements are exemplified in Geoffrey I. Nwaka's contribution on the forced resettlement of slum-dwellers from a city's centre to its periphery. This practice currently creates new social tensions in many cities in Africa. Another example of a particular urban rhythm of movement, focused on by Gabriel Klaeger, is the incessant search of mobile traders for more promising locations, for markets that might reveal a higher turnover and more profit.

An appropriate description of urban life-worlds in motion will not only address the multitude of movements at different speeds and in different directions, it will also consider their intermingling: none of them exists without interference from the other. Each one is – although to different degrees – a precondition for or an obstacle to the others. It is only the sum of all these movements that draws an adequate picture of the everyday life-worlds of African cities.

In his work *Rhythmanalysis*, Henry Lefebvre (2004) proposed a methodological paradigm to address the connections between the different levels of mobility. He develops his suggestions precisely in the context of urban life-worlds. He also underlines the importance not only of the actual migrations, but also of the expectations and experiences of movement and, in par-

ticular, the possibility to change one's own life through specific move-
ments. All these aspects are relevant for the constitution of transnational
communities within cities.

The context of an individual's evaluation of himself depends on wheth-
er, at a given moment, his 'migration project' to the intended destination
will be possible or not (Carling 2002). Vice versa, the self-conscious state-
ment of someone that has the means and knowledge to move to any place
he likes can be decisive for his identity. Thus, the image of a city is marked
by the perspectives of the people who live there, but who are also gazing
upon other horizons that extend beyond the city. For them, the city is a
'stepping stone' on their journey to somewhere else (Sinatti 2008). This
might appear to be an abstract statement, but it has been made evident by
Idrissou Mora-Kpai's film about the northern Nigerien town of Arlit (Mora-
Kpai 2005: *Arlit, deuxième Paris*). Mora Kpai forcefully shows that all
those portrayed in the film have a migratory biography; each of them un-
derstands his role in Arlit by referring to his own story. Every man, every
woman, every family has the experience of past movement. Some found a
profitable business in Arlit, and many of them expect to move on one day,
heading towards Europe. Some of the expectations become reality, most of
them fail, but this is not very important for one's perception of one's life-
world. The key to the subjective perceptions of these people's self-
evaluations is the idea of other places (back to the village of origin, forward
to Europe) to which the future might bring them. In this perspective, the
whole city becomes a crossroads of migratory projects following different
rhythms.

Henry Lefebvre (2004: 5ff.) called his approach a 'critique of the
thing', because he wanted to distinguish his method from approaches that
treat the city as a kind of material, spatially bounded object, or as a collec-
tion of objects, like buildings, roads and places. This is a valuable clarifica-
tion on the methodological level and supports the argument mentioned
above about the deterritorialization of urban life-worlds. However, there is
a particular 'materiality' to most movements. This perspective on material
items contributes to a better understanding of urban life-worlds. The mate-
riality of movements can be a matter of fact on a macroeconomic scale, as
is the case for the slum and the seemingly unacceptable dwellings of its in-
habitants. Poverty is a material fact, and many administrative decision-
makers are convinced that 'getting rid' of the slums' materiality is only

possible through forced resettlement from the centre to peripheral sectors (Marris 1961; Pellow 1991, 2002).

The materiality of mobile moments in urban life-worlds can also be found in other places that serve the movements of urbanites, such as bus stations, taxi stands, hotels and market places. These places have been categorized by James Clifford (1988: 237) as 'chronotopes', a reference to their temporal character, which may be considered indicators of the temporality and 'rhythmization' of urban life-worlds. The list of the objects of regular movements in specific life-worlds can be extended to encompass luggage, electronic devices usually associated with travellers, mobile people and, last but not least, clothing. A closer look at the various kinds of objects indicating movements provides even more evidence of the materiality of migration (Basu and Coleman 2008).

CONTRIBUTIONS

The theoretical considerations and methodological issues discussed so far constitute the framework for the contributions summarized in the following. Although these contributions presented at the VAD conference mentioned above seem to address quite distinct topics, they all focus on urban life-worlds and diverse movements on a micro-scale. At the same time, all of them deal with negotiations about the perceptions and valuations of movement in urban societies. Most probably, it is not by chance that almost all contributions also talk about conflicts when focusing on specific groups and the particular modes of mobility and specific life-styles that distinguish them from other people's movements.

One of the most concrete ways to describe movement is by referring to mobile street-vendors in Accra, the main topic of Gabriel Klaeger's contribution. Here, the speed of the vehicles and the speed of the hawkers decide the success of the petty traders' business. Speed is also an issue in the context of the forced resettlement of slum-dwellers in Nigeria. Geoffrey I. Nwaka stresses that there is no evidence for the contribution of resettlement schemes to the development of a city; instead, forced resettlement leads to a deterioration of the former slum-dwellers' lives. The range between the speedy micro-movements of street-vendors and the slow movements of

people who are subjected to resettlement shows the spectrum in the use of the notion of mobility when describing the complexity of urban life-worlds.

Another motive for movement may be the chance to adopt a certain lifestyle. The way moving people are in conflict or at least unsatisfied with particular lifestyles is the main theme of Primus Tazanu's contribution on young returnees in Cameroon. Those who suffered abroad in order to find a way to survive or to support their families in Cameroon are subjected to mockery at the place of origin, as they do not correspond to the expectations of those who did not travel. Life-style – of which Tazanu's contribution is a good example – is based on the logic of coherence and separation. It is due to those who do not take part in migration and who critically dissociate themselves from the migrants that migrants are forced to articulate a particular stylization.

Another example of conflicts over life-styles is the contribution of Bettina Frei, which deals with the controversial practice of 'scamming', or various fraudulent internet business practices. These create a direct link to their European and US-American victims by underlining the smartness of the young Cameroonians who succeed in convincing their communication partners of their invented business stories.

Life-styles are unavoidably part of any form of mobility. However, they are also connected to the materiality of movement. As already mentioned, the acquisition of material objects can be a driving force for movement. This becomes evident in the contribution of Tilman Musch, who deals with young Tuareg men and women who travel between Niger and Nigeria in order to purchase goods in the latter. Apart from the economic incentive, it is the search for adventure and the image of Nigeria as an example of prosperity and a modern life-style that make these young people move.

Frequent journeys are also undertaken by Haalpulaar people between their home villages in the Senegal river valleys and the capital of Dakar, which is the location of Abdoulaye Kane's case study. Thanks to new communication technologies these Haalpulaars also maintain strong relations to their diasporas in other African, European and North American cities. Thus, this case study provides further evidence of how spatial boundaries between village, town and the 'global world' are blurred.

Obviously, concepts like motion, mobility and movement cannot be measured in terms of statistics or quantitative criteria. Neither distance nor rhythms of movement are predictable and, very often, migration projects

never become a reality. Furthermore, it is evident that quantitative criteria have little meaning in explaining why motion has such high esteem for a self-conscious perspective on one's own society. A good example of the contradictions between actual immobility and a clear reference to (non-) existent migration is the contribution by Ludovic Kibora, who deals with a diaspora group in Ouagadougou. The setting is the place of origin of its members; thus, mobility in this case is purely a topic, a debate not related to concrete actions.

The redefinition of the prestige concerning the place of origin may be a typical strategy of diasporic groups and is examined in the contribution by Amber Gemmeke, who shows that the high esteem that certain marabouts enjoy within their translocal community in Dakar is linked to their strategy of conspicuously demonstrating a rural habitus. With their habitus referring to a remote place, these marabouts contribute to the establishment of a shared set of norms and values among their clients.

CONCLUSION

The questionable character of any definition of motion, mobility and movement may be regarded as an underlying hypothesis of all these contributions. They all deal with mobility and movement, not exclusively in the concrete sense of 'moving from one place to the other' (Casey 1996), but rather in a more complex way through the idea of the deterritorialization of life-worlds. In this way, the questioning of the concept of a spatially bounded locality is one of the coherent messages in this book. The protagonists who are in focus here, namely people on the move, understand their actions in contexts which draw their relevance from origins or destinations far beyond the place of the actual event.

This has some important methodological consequences. It is no longer possible to consider only the place of origin or the destination of migration. This means more particularly that any urban life-world cannot be limited to just one city. The ethnography of these places requires more complex strategies, which must also take into account inspirations, experiences and interfaces with other places. Deterritorialization may be an important clue to a better understanding without abandoning the concept of locality. The diver-

sity of links to other places and the range of different movements do not mean that the concrete life-world has lost its emplaced and local character.

Transnationalism and the globally circulating images of urbanity constitute a substantial development in the study of cities in Africa. The current reframing of urban studies is of equal relevance to the methodological milestones of the situated emergence of urban networks and the creation of new social forms of everyday life and rituals of the 1960s. At that time, authors like Mitchell, Epstein and Cohen provided methods for studying culture beyond the culturally bounded spaces of villages and 'ethnic territories'. Currently, authors like Glick Schiller, de Boeck, Malaquais, Nutall and Weiss are providing a framework for dealing with locality in a new way. Their inspiring studies of cities in Africa not only acknowledge the role of urban cultures in the context of understanding societies in Africa, they also expand the methodology of ethnographic studies in general. They urge Africanist scholars to reconsider the interconnectedness between different – and sometimes distant – places on the globe, without neglecting the notion of locality.

All the contributions in this volume stress the ideas of the transgression of the local and of deterritorialization concerning the notion of cities in Africa. However, none of the texts makes an assumption about 'what African cities are'. In contrast, it is more appropriate to refer to the dynamics of the expansion of urban life-worlds as a characteristic, which does not imply any specific notion about the actors' 'Africanness' and their networks. This is actually one of the reasons why it is possible for urbanites in and from Africa to become cosmopolitans and – in the following – to redefine 'Africa' as a topic, as a set of practices that are also lived and dealt with in Europe. Questions about African cultures are no longer answered in Africa alone but must also be linked to Dubai, Paris or New York, among other places. This new dynamic takes urban life-worlds as a starting point and will probably play a decisive role in the future of African societies.

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