What politics? : Youth and political engagement in Africa

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What Politics?

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What Politics?

Youth and Political Engagement in Africa

Edited by

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Henri Onodera
Leena Suurpää

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Preface and Acknowledgements

In October of 2016, when chapters of this book were being polished and editors and authors were communicating between Helsinki, Johannesburg, Addis Ababa, Reykjavik and Montreal, some of the exchanges between us capture the conspicuous spirit and circumstances in which this volume ultimately materialized:

> Yes I can do the revisions to the chapter. Need the distraction... the country is burning ...We're trying. But even debriefing students is considered insubordination ... Trying to action things. Feeling hopeless ... They shot one woman nine times in the back today ... In bed. Doctor's orders. It's a mess. The chapter is coming.
>
> DANAI MUPOTSA to ELINA OINAS, October 2016

> As you may be aware, there is political unrest in Ethiopia and a state of emergency has been declared in the country. Because of the unrest, the Internet service has been closed in most places in Ethiopia. This has made it difficult for me to look for more literature. I was only able to read the literature sent to me by you.
>
> MULUMEBET ZENEBE to LEENA SUURPÄÄ October 2016

The scholarly duties of analysing, writing and 'arguing' amount to a painful exercise when conducted amidst university shut-downs and violent chasings and beatings of protesters, in settings flavoured with tear gas and filled with the sound of rubber bullets. In South Africa, for instance, rioting, energized new alliances and sometimes bitter divisions between factions of students and staff have become the order of the day in the mid-2010s. In Ethiopia, academics have limited access to on-line resources due to the state of emergency announced by the government. In both corners of the continent, youthful uprisings signal both hope and serious concerns for future prospects. In addition to the courage to envision and claim alternative futures, strong sentiments of disappointment and fear also run high among young people. National governments are expected to facilitate students' transitions to adulthood and meaningful citizenship, not let them down, let alone shoot at them. In these circumstances, universities are far from ivory towers detached from reality but, rather, the epicentres of claims-making, societal upheavals and youthful aspirations.

At the outset of compiling this volume in 2012, the world was trying to understand the popular uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East which

were soon labelled the 'Arab Spring'. Prior to this period of political turbulence, which resulted in regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and protracted warfare in Syria and Yemen, it was often claimed that today's youth are increasingly individualistic and prone to political 'apathy', only catering to their private success and consumerist lifestyles, including – or especially – in Africa. In Africa, young people's discontent and aspirations were seldom voiced through democratic channels, as their political participation was hampered by 'Big Man politics', gerontocratic power structures and daily struggles to make ends meet, among other factors. The established research paradigm defined 'the political' in such a way that young people were seen as either excluded from politics or not interested in it in the first place.

Against this background, the 'Arab Spring' became a mediatized global event that, rather surprisingly, toppled longstanding presidents from power and spread youthful confidence and restlessness like wildfire. Today, it seems obvious that the assumption of lazy, apathetic and self-interested youth is far from accurate. The question is whether the global North wishes to understand what sizzles in the outbursts of riots in Niamey, Harare or Cape Town. This book suggests that scholars and policy-makers in both global North and South should be interested and continuously attuned to the historical events that are unfolding before our eyes. The mere number of young people in Africa today is in itself too high to be ignored. This volume is by no means comprehensive, yet we believe that it is a contribution to better understanding of the lives of young people not only in Africa but in today's globalized world.

A constant predicament for African scholars, who may want to pursue their own research interests, is that they are often overburdened by international collaborative projects. Their efforts to spend their time meaningfully are frequently thwarted by schedules and agendas dictated by others. Importantly, research outcomes are often designed to serve the needs of policy-makers and consultants rather than their own academic ambitions. Furthermore, reporting on political unrest against incumbent authorities at the local level – be they university administrators, the police apparatus or the ruling party – may easily put the researchers at risk. In addition to these prevailing obstacles, there are subtle mechanisms within academia that prevent academics from publicly taking sides in local conflicts and power struggles. Activist researchers may end up being side-lined and accused of lacking academic rigor, of being biased, or labelled as difficult, crazy, subjective or, simply, too 'political'. There are very few 'academic' means to counter accusations of this nature. Staying quietly in the ranks and conducting evaluations that bring in income is all too often the only remaining alternative.

Scholars based in universities in the global North have better resources to dominate academic debates, a state of affairs which potentially leads to

entrenched biases and the neglect of local struggles and understandings of what counts as political in different contexts. This book has far from escaped this dilemma of unequal and uneven knowledge production, and we are acutely aware of the problem's being further heightened in social research in Africa that aims to bring to the fore the perspectives of young people themselves. For us, one way to address this contested issue has been to practise reflexive and transparent positioning in each case, and to be as receptive as possible as to the issues that matter for the lives of young informants. It has also been refreshing to collaborate from positions far from the centres of global knowledge production. During the process we noticed that this volume is an outcome of on-going dialogue between somewhat peripheral locations, such as Helsinki in Finland and Kitgum in Northern Uganda, or Uppsala in Sweden and Bobo-Dioulasso in Burkina Faso.

We are extremely grateful to the authors, who kept going through the years, regardless of the abundance of disruptions at several levels. But first and foremost we wish to thank the young informants, whose lives, experiences, practices and analyses inform the discussions in this book. The young people in Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, Ghana, Kenia, Niger, Somaliland, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, United States and Zimbabwe are the interlocutors and co-producers of the knowledge presented here.

Furthermore, there are several institutions and organizations to which we owe gratitude for enabling us to finish this book. Firstly, the Academy of Finland funded the research project *Youth and Political Engagement in Contemporary Africa* (2012–2016, project nr 258235) under whose auspices this volume was compiled. In addition, the chapters were developed during workshops in collaboration with the University of Helsinki, the Finnish Youth Research Network, the Finnish Society for Development Research, the Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID), the World Social Forum, the Nordic Network of African Childhood and Youth Research (NoNACYR, especially Tatek Abebe), the Nordic Africa Institute and the University of Witwatersrand.

We wish to thank a few individuals who have been essential in the making of this book. Vincenzo Cicchelli, the anonymous reviewers and staff at Brill offered their support and invaluable comments on the manuscript. Marie-Louise Karttunen at Emelle's Editing Services is a prompt and highly professional copy-editor working to a tight schedule. Finally, Ella Alin acted as editorial assistant during the whole process, and her contribution was invaluable.

The editors
12 February 2017
Helsinki, Finland

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List of Abbreviations

AAU	Addis Ababa University
AEMN/UAM	Association des Étudiants Musulmans du Niger à l'Université Abdou Moumouni
AEMUN	Association des Étudiants Musulmans à l'Université de Niamey
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMA	Africa Muslims Agency
ANC	African National Congress
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
ARV	Anti-retroviral
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CESTI	Centre d'Études des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information in Dakar/ Inter-African College for Information Sciences and Technologies
CIERRO	Centre Inter-Africain d'Études en Radio Rurale of Ouagadougou/ Inter-African College for Rural Broadcasting
CORD	Coalition for Reforms and Democracy
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
EPPR	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FORD-Kenya	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy
HAAC	Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication/The Supreme Media Board in Benin
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HSIU	Haile Selassie I University
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INGO	International non-governmental organization
KANU	Kenya African National Union
LRM/A	Lord's Resistance Movement/Army
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MK	Umkhonto weSizwe
MP	Member of Parliament
NDP	National Democratic Party (Egypt)
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NYS	National Youth Service

ODEM	Observatoire de la Déontologie et de l'Éthique dans les Médias/Independent Media Watch Institute of Journalists in Benin
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement Party
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization
ORTB	Office de Radiodiffusion et Télévision du Bénin/The public broadcasting house of Benin
PCC	Pentecostal-Charismatic Church/Christianity
SEPDM	Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement
SOMAFCO	Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College
TNA	The National Alliance
TPLF	Tigray People Liberation Front
UAM	Université Abdou Moumouni
UCAA	University College of Addis Ababa
UCT	University of Cape Town
UENUN	Union des Étudiants du Niger à l'Université de Niamey
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPMB	Union des Professionels des Medias du Benin/Association of Media Professionels of Benin
USN	Union des Scolaires Nigériens
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front

Evasive Youth, Oblique Politics

Elina Oinas, Henri Onodera and Leena Suurpää

Introduction

Amina 'returns' to her childhood hometown in Somaliland in high hopes of making a difference and contributing to the reconstruction of her home country with her British education and resources, but she feels neither welcome nor influential. She does not know if her efforts matter, and starts to get disillusioned. If she cannot know, can a researcher know? How does a researcher define 'political', 'influence', or 'making a difference' anywhere, let alone on Amina's street corner where she has her small business selling imported fashion products, and her new ideas of what femininity could mean? Is it even meaningful to hold on to the concept of politics when analysing Amina's vague sense of social change? Similar concerns about how to achieve a sense of belonging, recognition and engagement are raised by a young man we call John, in Kenya, wondering if he will ever have a fair chance at national politics, given his marginalized background. Meanwhile, Zimbabwean Zizi knows that as a youth league agitator he and his group's violence most certainly has had an impact in the neighbourhood they visited – or terrorized, some would say – but he knows he had little choice.

Alongside the hesitations of Amina, John and Zizi, researchers in youth and politics in Africa encounter stories of life-altering moments of companionship and victory told by young activists. Similar experiences of shared passion and inspiration appear in this volume, recounted, for example, by Thembi in Johannesburg and Muhammad in Cairo. The energy and determination of students who struggle against the institutionalized racism and oppression of black students and workers in today's South Africa, echo in other accounts in quite different circumstances including the leisure spaces near Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo.

Narratives such as these, and the voices of other young people filling the pages below, paint unique pictures of what they hoped for and what then ensued in their lives in different parts of the continent. Regardless of the meaningful doubts and reflexivity among us researchers, there are a surprising number of similarities and overlaps in the analytical discussions in the different chapters of this book. They collectively offer the reader a journey of comparing,

contrasting and cross-valorizing the agency of contemporary young people in attaining recognition and change in Africa. Despite the ambivalences in the face of the task's magnitude, we as editors have had a growing sense of purposefulness in compiling qualitative case studies of young people's accounts of politics and what matters to them in different parts of Africa, covering moments of excitement and purpose, but also of despair, anger and disillusionment.

All the key terms we use in this book – youth, Africa, politics – are highly contested and should be so. In the course of the different chapters we do not search for uniform meanings but, rather, valorize the key aspects of what young people's engagements are about in contemporary Africa, and how they describe their attempts to carve out spaces of change and autonomy. The empirical realities and the perspectives of youth, as well as the interpretations of the researchers, are discussed against academic literature from a variety of disciplines, often derived from settings that are inherently different from the empirical research sites – the typical mismatch between Northern theory and Southern data applies here too. There is also, however, a need to move beyond exceptionalism and particularizing descriptions of 'Africa' and critically examine how concepts travel and how similar questions may be relevant in diverse settings in the globalizing world (Laine et al. 2015).

'Youth' as an Allusive Yet Meaningful Category

'African youth' emerged as a powerful category and gained currency in academic and policy-related research at the turn of the millennium (e.g., Christiansen, Utas and Vigh 2006). The growing interest is linked to the sheer numbers of young people in Africa – the youngest continent in the world, with 70% of its population under 30 years of age – as one of the key global challenges to be managed with an array of development, immigration and social policies (Kelly and Kamp 2015, 7). While Africans currently only comprise 16% of the world's inhabitants, the continent has the most rapidly growing population (United Nations 2015, 7), and by 2050, more than half of global growth is expected to take place there; currently, the ten countries with the highest fertility rates in the world are in Africa (ibid., 9). The demographic concern is often tied to the urge to governmentality which is traditional in population research.

The growing interest can also be explained by the mounting wave of rebellions, unrest, conflicts and even revolutions on the continent, not least since the popular uprisings in Northern Africa, the so-called 'Arab Spring', in 2011, as well as the increasing migrations of African youth towards the global North. Here, the analysts have focused on the alarming prospects of stifling

generational and geographical divides and growing, hypervisible inequalities. Both contribute to the creation of affective and interpersonal experiences of marginalization and relative deprivation among young people in terms of their economic, social, and political standing and their life chances in the future, potentially leading to unrest and dissension among them (cf. Resnick and Thurlow 2015; Feixa, Leccardi and Nilan 2016). The concept of gerontocracy – or rule by the elderly – features in most analyses of African politics, pointing to the ways in which young people are systematically denied access to political power or economical resources by older generations.

The notion of the political is, however, unusually challenging to define when attempting to reach a better understanding of youthful engagements in the public life and societies of the vast continent. In the case of Africa, it is pertinent to go beyond discussing mere political participation in existing formal structures, such as the state and the government, as in classic political science – although this caution is relevant everywhere nowadays. In African post-colonial contexts, discussing politics is also hard due to the negative connotations the word 'political' carries in its everyday usage. As with other projects on youth and politics, our point of departure in studying young people's political engagements is, therefore, to be attentive to any "will to enact social change" (Allaste and Cairns 2016, 3). To widen the scope of what can be deemed relevant, the concept of 'participation' is here replaced by the more oblique 'engagement', signalling all kinds of involvements in enacting change that materialize and are felt in everyday life (cf. della Porta and Mattoni 2014).

Networks and mechanisms of power produce subject positions, discourses and ideas on what is considered normal and possible, and moments when these assumptions of power are challenged can be considered political. Deborah Posel makes an interesting and useful distinction between the politics of sexuality and the politicization of sexuality, suggesting that

> sexuality is always political, as the site of multiple strategies of regulation and discipline and their uneven effects; but sexuality is only intermittently politicized, in the sense of becoming the site of heated public argument, mobilization and conflict. Thus, if the former is a systemic feature of any modern social order, the latter is the product of historical conjunctures.
>
> POSEL 2005, 127

The political engagements studied in this book are not limited to a study of willful subjects making calculated choices, especially not only in the predetermined arenas of formal democratic apparatuses; rather, using Posel's

formulation, we discuss specific "historical conjunctures" that are interrupted and acted upon by young people in their everyday lives. At times these refer to spectacular events, such as protests and riots, and at other times to ideological expressions and rhetoric. Simultaneously, however, less visible or articulated forms of discontent and agency are equally relevant for us.

The statistical analysis by Danielle Resnick (2015, 48–49) shows that while there has indeed been a substantial increase in riot and protest activities since 2008 in Africa, the share of specifically youth protests has not grown, and remains low. Youth is in this context defined as the age cohort 15–35, following the African Union definition that considers the delay in transition into adulthood typical for African societies (Resnick 2015, 51). Statistical evidence is, however, a contested issue, especially regarding political unrest in undemocratic circumstances. Furthermore, even if the reliability of statistics goes unchallenged, qualitative researchers observe that there is a widespread sense of change and protest in the air, and such simmering sentiments and temporary successes potentially fuel each other.

With growing global connectedness through media, migration, technology and both popular and alternative global cultural circuits, the ambivalence of the 'youth' category and what it entails does not solely concern Africa (Suurpää et al. 2015). Mainstream development agencies, such as international financial institutions and national decision makers, operate with clear policy definitions of youth, namely, those belonging to distinct age cohorts (such as 15–29/35 years of age). While such definitions are important for policy purposes, it is obvious that they place insufficient emphasis on the cultural attributes, social meanings and expressions of what being young may contain beyond the age limitations (Clark-Kazak 2009).

The authors in this book represent different fields of the social sciences, including anthropology, sociology and political science, as well as youth research, development research and gender studies. We have not considered it necessary to operationalize a shared understanding of 'youth'; rather, it is viewed here as a context-sensitive category that reflects social, economic, political, moral and emotional predicaments and embodied processes. In other words, being young is seen as a personal, collective and intrinsically cultural experience that is further structured by gender, social class, ethnicity, religion and other social distinctions, as well as the material resources available at a given time. Indeed, we take intersecting positions and identities seriously, giving equal, if not greater, importance to those that were expressed by the young people themselves: such as student, activist, NGO-professional, musician, believer, but also silenced, marginalized, violated, whether in the villages in Kenya and Zimbabwe, Egyptian metropoles, or Niger's university campuses.

While it is contended that the category of youth is ambivalent and fluid, we acknowledge that it encompasses often normative aspirations, positioning young people as a destabilizing force to be met with and managed, or an illusionary hope for the future. Joschka Philipps (2014) recently summarized the discursive landscape that deals with youth in Africa as prone to paradoxical narratives. Philipps proposes that this feature is documented in the uniform naming practice of publications, like *Heroes or Villains* (Seekings 1993), *Hooligans or Heroes* (Perullo 2005), *Vanguard or Vandals* (Abbink and van Kessel 2005), *Makers or Breakers* (Honwana and de Boeck 2005), 'Promise or Peril' (Muhula 2007), *Troublemakers or Peacemakers* (McEvoy-Levy 2006; see Philipps 2014, 1362; Resnick and Thurlow 2015, 1). Philipps suggests that the size and variation within the category – or non-category due to its largeness – enable the generalizing level of analysis.

The book titles withstanding, the actual qualitative analysis of youth lives in Africa is seldom oversimplifying, we would argue. The legacy of accountability and commitment in relation to young people themselves works against simplistic descriptions. Research participants do not often account for the richness of their lives in clear-cut terms. Such an accountability means that we envision Thembi and John as well as the Northern scholars and policy makers as our readers. This leads to an aspiration to maintain awe in the face of the complexity of social life, to study without explaining it all, and to respect the evasive and unexplainable in life as an epistemic stance from which to work.

Both Pumla Dineo Gqola (2015) and Kopano Ratele (2016) underline the contradiction when studying young men in South Africa: one must read black men's lives against a history of colonialism and oppression yet not reduce them merely to pawns of history. Further, when researching a violent present the racist frames of interpretation that dominate the way African men are viewed must be interrogated and deconstructed. This double task to historicize and deconstruct is a necessary analytical lens that recalls the importance of situating and contextualizing young people's own versions of their lives, while sometimes moving beyond their own views. It is possible to take the histories of the present seriously, including the often unarticulated but heavily present frame of colonial representations of dangerous youth, even when acknowledging the legacy and ethos of the youth research tradition that young people's perspectives on what matters are valid and important per se. An effort to engage with young people's struggles with neither a sentimental nor overly factualizing tone has been a key ethos in the making of this book.

Anthropologists Diane Singerman (2007) and Alcinda Honwana (2012, 2014) have inspired us with explorations in 'waithood', a prolonged period of suspension between childhood and adulthood that has become a common

predicament whereby young people are increasingly barred from transition-ing to adulthood in their material and cultural contexts. We also agree that it is important not to generalize the predicament but, rather, to examine the every-day experiences of those living in such conditions empirically. Young people improvise solutions not only to cope but also to promote a sense of self that emerges beyond the dominant economic and patrimonial frameworks that indeed hamper their life chances. Institutionalized vulnerability and limited opportunities notwithstanding, as Honwana also suggests, the concept of wait-hood should not, however, assign overtly passive roles to an entire generation but also indicate opportunities of experimentation, innovation and leisure.

It has been our goal to pay close attention to the setting and the actors who materialize through the processes of becoming, which are always unique yet thoroughly social and political. The need to reiterate this challenge to over-come dualities, often framed as ambivalence or paradox, is not only telling of the researchers' task, but of the global discussion on Africa, youth and politics in the 2010s, of which researchers are inherently part. A tendency to underline agency despite hardship or victimizing circumstance is typical for the research on exclusion or oppression everywhere (Jungar and Oinas 2011), but perhaps especially urgent in Africa with its on-going neo-colonialisms, not least in the sphere of academic knowledge practices (Kontinen and Oinas 2015). The task then, regardless of location, is to untie the connection between victimizing so-cial reality and an assumption of an automatic, stigmatized identity category. Scholars publishing on Africa thus require an extra sensitivity in terms of how to address different publics. We can be both responsible allies and constructive critics when witnessing the practices of young people.

What Engagements? From Uprisings to Vague Discontents

Writing the anthology in 2016, we are especially attuned to examining what the initial promise of popular uprisings in North Africa have meant for young people in the entire region, but also outside their specific geographical areas, as a source of inspiration and frustration. Moving further south, what have the 20 years of post-apartheid transition, its hope and the potential of democracy as an idea, in and beyond South Africa, meant for today's young people who seem to be getting increasingly pessimistic and angry?

While attending to the diversity of experiences, the authors, in their own ways, examine the contours of what political engagement could mean. As re-flected in the book's title, *What politics?* the concept of political engagement is operationalized here to refer to different kinds of activities, or ways of being

and doing, through which young people engage in their immediate and imagined social environments with an aim of making best of them. At the same time, the book offers insights into the striking similarities in thinking and struggles among young people in Africa today. We especially take the quests for livelihood and belonging, social worth and dignity into the equation of what is at stake when coming of age. The comparative and contrastive reading of several cases reveals different ways in which 'politics' could be conceived in the lives of young people themselves. While the chapters discuss various contexts that differ in terms of state formation and democratic structures, post-conflict developments, NGO involvement, donor funding and global connections, they collectively evoke new questions to be asked when letting concepts travel.

In particular, we wish to challenge assumptions about the parameters of what constitutes political participation, and highlight a set of features that go against the grain in ways that destabilize the classical tools of the trade when analysing political agency. Our point of departure is the obvious observation that a restricted focus on formal processes of political participation in Africa (or elsewhere) does not suffice (e.g. Mamdani 1996; Lust-Okar and Zerhouni 2008; Jabberi and Laine 2015). Although civil society campaigning, social movements, party politics, elections and public 'high-level' politics do matter, and shape young people's lives, an effort is made here to move simultaneously beyond state-oriented analysis and toward the questions of what matters to the young themselves. For instance, lifestyle choices, generational struggles and access to material resources within and beyond these public arenas are of interest, and bear witness to the more varied social dynamics at play. At the minimum, it has not been for us to decide a priori what are, for young people, the relevant ways of engaging and belonging in the social world. Even seemingly mundane acts and practices that often go unnoticed may serve to extend the experience of being young and, in sufficient numbers, contribute considerably to social change (Bayat 2010; Onodera 2015).

Politics, policy and the political have a tarnished, self-interested and corrupted affective value in many African contexts (Chabal 2009). Young people often distance themselves from the given political identities and affiliations, even in the midst of revolutionary upheaval, so as to imagine the content of politics anew. For those willing, the doors to formal political participation are guarded by gender and especially age-based hierarchical structures. Several chapters discuss gerontocracy and patrimonialism as features that shape the landscape wherein young people must try to manoeuvre. Even when aspiring to autonomous agency young activists are suspected of being mere puppets of somebody else's agenda, narrowing the field of sincere political action.

Disillusionment, suspicion and even paranoia are sentiments that loom in at-tempts to mobilize. The label of being manipulated, bought or brainwashed, whether by donors, Western ideas or local Big Men, haunts attempts to carve out a space for deliberation.

There are clear similarities in how state structures and power elites are viewed with suspicion among youth globally, but it is also important to bear in mind the contextual differences in public engagement. While in some contexts the frequency of public protest can indicate declining trust in public institu-tions, it may also be so that a paucity of civic engagement and demonstrations signals that faith in the state been lost. For example, in Nigeria public protest is far rarer than in South Africa, where people, especially the marginalized, en-gage in thousands of small and large scale protests annually (Brown 2015). Per-haps the South Africans have remained more hopeful regarding state delivery of services than the average Nigerian who no longer believes in public services at all? Lack of political engagement may indicate either contented or utterly disappointed citizens. Some choose to disengage out of disinterest, others out of disgust and disillusionment (Ekman and Amnå 2012). The student protests in South Africa possibly indicate the end of an era and the final heart beats of a failing democracy, or perhaps a re-energizing of the political landscape and a renewed commitment to the public arena among youth. Only time will tell.

Individualism and Political Subjects

For today's youth key issues are resources and social justice, even when they take the shape of acts of consumerism and seemingly vain representations of selfhood. Thus, from working on explicit uprisings, activism, political partici-pation and struggles for rights, the chapters move on to explore music, friend-ships, feminism and globally circulating tastes, commodities and ideas. Nor should we overlook repetitive everyday survival, gestures of destruction and active withdrawal as political articulations, even if the young do not frame these activities as 'political'.

Attempts to go beyond formal and institutionalized political engagements towards questions of what young people seek in their everyday lives encounter the issue of individual good versus collective good. For example, can we view conspicuous consumerism as an active attempt to challenge racist assump-tions of worth and dignity in Southern Africa (Mupotsa 2015) and beyond? The individualizing ethos of contemporary capitalism seeps into discourses every-where, and while often described as a 'Western' preoccupation, it is a global phenomenon whose articulations can be detected in the chapters here. Is

individualism in conflict with a wider sense of collective resistance, or perhaps another dimension of any social engagement today? The case studies in this book confirm that individualism versus a more collective mode of existence is a false problematic. More generally, the widespread and negatively coded assumptions of today's youth as materialistic and individualistic are investigated in this volume, as we argue that such aspirations can be seen as a desire for lived practices of dignity, equality and justice.

Childhood researchers Jouni Häkli and Kirsi Pauliina Kallio (2013) discuss the difficulty scholars often face when exploring children's and young people's political agency and resistance, and their need to overcome the analytical dichotomy between two extremes, whereby

> at one end stands the subject as self-sufficient, enduring and sovereign individual, from which all consciousness and action springs. At the other end the subject dissolves into a non-sovereign product of social and discursive construction, devoid of any stability, autonomy and unity of self.
>
> HÄKLI and KALLIO 2013, 4

In African Studies, individualizing theory traditions are contrasted with the assumption of more collectivist cultures in Africa (e.g., Tamale 2011). The emphasis on the collective embeddedness of the self is welcome, but should not exceptionalize African subjectivities; rather, the need to examine the relationality and dynamism between the possibly imagined self and collective life should be insisted upon everywhere.

In this book, we seek passages and insights into the realm between the intersubjectively constituted self(hood) and the social context which the individual reflects upon and is embedded in. Political structures, like the state or the market, are exemplary institutions where subjectivities are constituted, possibly in meaningful and empowering ways, but the immediate experiences of young people often evolve in more mundane settings that are generally more important for them, such as schooling, family, friendship circles and the workplace. The chapters provide empirical interrogations of the concept of the subject and the social, meanwhile generating meaningful tools for analysing the subjectification processes that are specific to contexts of assumed lack of social security, gender equality and avenues for formal participation in politics.

Creative technologies of the self may take unexpected forms, and lead to interruptions that can seem incomprehensible to researchers (Oinas 2015). We may find "subjects who cannot speak, refuse to speak; subjects who unravel, who refuse to cohere; subjects who refuse 'being' where being has already been defined in terms of a self-activating, self-knowing, liberal subject" (Halberstam

2012, 186). However, we can learn to see such acts of disruption and destruction as political, and in many ways meaningful. The affective dimensions of the political present an area of research that is fruitful for the study of youth and politics in contemporary Africa. It comes with the opportunity to trace and understand prevailing sentiments, such as the "anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation" (Lorde 1981) among young people. These can, although not without difficulty, translate into academic accounts of political engagements.

Recently, research on queer Africa has reconfigured ways to express the personal as political in a number of volumes mixing academic and creative writing, as well as the political and personal voice (e.g., Gunkel 2010; Tamale 2011; Ekine and Abbas 2013; Matebeni 2016). In queer research, mere staying alive and the work to be regarded human is political. Zethu Matebeni argues in the recent book, *Walking the Tightrope*, that often "LGBT people are regarded as less than human – opposing the nature of things and godly creations", adding: "Those of us who do not have the pleasure of taking life for granted are constantly reminded of the struggle to be human. It is not merely a matter of being given an intrinsic right because even that can sometimes leave you insufficient" (Matebeni 2016, no number). In this volume we aim to follow her lead into the issues of "connectedness; fragility; fluidity; malleability; plasticity; failure; achievement and resistance" (ibid.).

Lastly, it is important to end this discussion of what constitutes the 'political' for young people in Africa today with a reminder that while researchers tend to study admirable examples of engagement, many youthful engagements are also destructive, conservative and oppressive. In any society some young people strive to pass and belong, using the tools of the existing hierarchies of power. There are those whose actions strengthen current positions of power and others who merely aspire to maintain the status quo but access its resources. On the more progressive spectrum of change there are those whose involvement is mainly a rejection of the contemporary situation, while others seek to expand the existing horizons. Who is to evaluate the worth and morality of any such agency? As in the legacy of youth research, rather than political science and development studies, we are hesitant to judge, and aspire rather to achieve better understanding without excessive romanticizing.

Contents

This book examines the experiences of being young in today's Africa, using qualitative methodologies in a variety of social science disciplines, especially

in the fertile intersection between development studies and youth research, fields that seldom interact. The contributors represent both established and upcoming scholars in their respective fields. We consider the richness of empirical cases and multiple standpoints a positive quality of the present volume. For example, through the application of comparison we can ask why in a South African university some girls were able to challenge and politicize sexual violence through formal channels (Mitchell, de Lange and Moletsane, this volume), when hypocrisies of sexual cultures can be problematized only through silent graffiti in Addis Ababa University (Mulumebet, this volume). Policies and staff play a role, too. Contrasting contexts can bring to fore characteristics that might otherwise be so taken for granted that we do not notice them. We hope to produce suggestions for shared theoretical questions that can travel.

One aim of this book is to explore young people's engagements by critically examining, yet not completely withdrawing from, the clearly defined language of politics and ideology. It offers multiple viewpoints onto the experiences of young people as to their (assumed) roles, place, positions and experiences both within and beyond formal political structures and institutions or so-called public political spaces. In doing so, it also challenges the dichotomy of voluntary and involuntary agency. It is important to contest the idea that everyone has the freedom to choose their own singular path, even while valorizing the energy and drive to seek out new ways of belonging and breaking free. Political structures in Africa are often described as gerontocratic and clientelistic, thereby hampering young people's political participation and life transitions. This tendency is supported by the findings here, although these institutions also offer spaces through which normative notions of political participation, and the young people's experiences thereof, can take new shapes.

The collection is organized into three sections on the basis of the orientations of engagement among the young people, thus moving beyond analytical dichotomies, both alarmist and celebratory, and providing instead empirically grounded analyses that reveal what is shared and what is unique in different contexts and locations across the continent. The sections, called 'Envisioning', 'Entitlement' and 'Embeddedness', are not presented as ways to promote rigid analytical divisions but to draw attention to the multiple dimensions of everyday experience in which young people engage and of which they are part.

Envisioning

The first section emphasizes creative agency and youthful aspirations for personal and collective autonomy. Here new ideas and ideals of engagement are highlighted among, by and for young people themselves, outside formal political arenas. Alternative expressions of citizenship, decency and respect are central to the activities described in this section. Yet, even though they are youth-led,

youth-oriented and in the here and now, they may have a legacy of prior move-
ments, such as the youth movement against apartheid (Mupotsa, this volume),
for example, or past generations of student activism (Adamu and Balsvik, this
volume). Similarly, an orientation towards youth does not limit the scale of
action: the wish to generate a contemporary movement dealing with issues im-
portant to the young today, like the high cost of education, does not exclude an
aspiration to address larger political issues of urgency like the state of democ-
racy (Mupotsa, this volume) or morality (Sounaye, Alava, this volume). These
cases challenge the assumption that young people's grievances can be side-
lined or suspended as less central to current, actual, serious political questions.
These youth are not future political agents, but contemporary.

Autonomous action and a desire to work with and for other young people,
have been typical features historically, often with successful outcomes, wheth-
er expressed in the form of student unions, political party youth leagues or
youth wings of revolutionary (underground) movements, all of which have
played important roles in African history (Resnick 2015). Currently, however,
in the face of prevailing gerontocracy, the youth-orientedness of their initia-
tives may lead to the marginalization of their views. The chapters discuss the
contexts of student politics and youth-led NGOs as well as the more informal
sides of youth activism, revealing the multiple pitfalls the actors are compelled
to negotiate when engaging with formal and informal avenues to public life.
The authors in this section also discuss generational dynamics and geronto-
cratic power structures and relations that may block participation, at the same
time reiterating that current scholarship cannot and should not predict where
youth networks might lead and what forms they may acquire in the *longue
durée*.

Danai Mupotsa offers a reflection on the recent student activism, the #Fees-
MustFall, at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. Mupotsa
suggests that the movements use the biographical 'moments' of awakening to
expose the failed promise of democracy – which is caught up in dialectical
struggles about the university, its promises and institutional life – with their
awareness of the impossibility of recognition. Mupotsa's argument underlines
the importance of not getting trapped in either-or polarizing analysis; a per-
sonal interest in access to education through lower fees, and political engage-
ment in the struggle for a more democratic society are different sides of the
same coin. Student protest is simultaneously self-interested, pragmatic and
utopian.

Henri Onodera explores the everyday lives of young activists before the 2011
uprisings in Egypt, discussing the ambivalent roles of friendship in the context
of their democratic struggle. On the one hand, relations of friendship provided

invaluable support in times of crisis and struggle, yet, being so precious, they were also fragile, constantly shifting and subject to manipulation. Despite sharing their dissent against the incumbent authorities, keeping and negotiating one's friendship, including the trust and loyalty that were involved, proved to be one of the most meaningful of everyday engagements for activist youth, hinting at the ways that micro-level relationships could provoke broader visions of how society and politics should be organized.

For many young people formal institutions are not to be trusted, and traditional political ideologies are less compelling compared to, for example, cultural, religious, ethnic or consumerist engagements. Although these engagements take a step away from the formal political realm, even abandoning the very word 'political', the chapters argue for the importance of making sense of political messages and rhetoric embedded in these forms of engagement. Sofia Laine, Leena Suurpää and Afifa Ltifi explore the roles and meanings of music in the collective engagement of young musicians in Tunisia, deploying the concept of 'respectful resistance' to discuss how young musicians in Tunisia strive for social change while not insisting on overt confrontation with society and its prevailing social order. Mounir Saidani also discusses Tunisian youth, arguing that due to their disappointments after the revolution, young activists have turned to the arts as a channel for their engagements. In their chapter, Ehaab Abdou and Loubna H. Skalli inquire whether youth-led organizations in Egypt's NGO sector form alternative spaces for political participation, and the role that their claim to being 'non-political' plays in this context.

Mulumebet Zenebe explores graffiti on the campus of the of Addis Ababa University (AAU) in Ethiopia as silent resistance and a way of addressing, for example, questions of ethnic and sexual boundaries. Importantly, she also underlines that youthful agency is not only progressive and should not be celebrated and romanticized for its mere existence, but analysed critically. For example, graffiti as a phenomenon does important work in expanding the space for expression under a repressive regime and cultural climate, but, as to their content, more often than not the AAU graffiti rather cements than contests old hierarchies, by slandering female sexual desire, for example. While a lot of the analysis in this first section points to a drive to break free and imagine and generate new landscapes for participation, youth are seldom so distanced that they do not also utilize existing dynamics and resources of power.

Entitlements

The second section highlights young people's efforts to claim and justify their right to resources that elsewhere or for other people seem taken for granted. Aspirations to belong and be entitled to a role in society also involve quests for

material justice and life chances in the future. The authors here demonstrate that struggles for dignity, change and livelihood, including desires for materially defined success in life, co-exist in young people's everyday lives and dreams. The realms of the ideological and the material should not be juxtaposed when analysing young people's agency in precarious circumstances (Butler and Athanasiou 2013).

The material struggles of young people in contemporary Africa are often relegated to the informal economy. Access to a position in the formal economy is less likely to be within reach, and may come with unacceptable terms, for example, at the cost of autonomy. Lack of access to loans, funds and networks to start a small enterprise is a widely shared obstacle for young people on the continent (Aït Mous 2016). This is enhanced by a reasonable lack of trust in management practices and the hierarchical and authoritarian leadership styles in the often neo-patrimonial formal sector. Some even ask if formal education today is relevant in terms of providing adequate skills for the contemporary labour market, especially for the creative 'hustling' that seems to be one avenue of manoeuvre for youth. Hustling for personal or group-based gain means making do, coping, even being successful on a short term basis, but without the glamour of the 'start-up' of their Northern counterparts. Yet making it for the moment can in many circumstances be a political act in itself, simply because it is an activity that also makes a claim on the future – constituting a demand to be seen as someone to be reckoned with, as occupying a space – or, sometimes, that simply shifts the terms of what making it, success or looking cool means (Ratele 2016).

Jesper Bjarnesen's chapter deals with diaspora youth in urban Burkina Faso who end up being engaged in political campaigns. Their involvement reflects their 'diaspo' position in society, admired and rejected at the same time. The politics of inclusion and exclusion can be successfully exploited by the Big Men politicians with cash, but also by the young men themselves. Nanna Jordt Jørgensen's chapter discusses young people's claims to meaningful roles in the local sand business in Northern Kenya, and how they hustle not only for their rights to broker the scarce natural resource but also for their visions of how the community should be organized.

Henni Alava's Northern Ugandan Christian informants describe their views of themselves and their future hopes as explicitly non-political, paradoxically allowing Alava to delineate the political dimension in this claim. The withdrawal from anything political to Christianity and decency must be understood against the post-war setting. These youth are clearly not radical in their views; rather, they choose to turn to a conservative institution, a mainline church – but in a setting where attaining a peaceful, respectable life is an

achievement, and holding on to the right to a good life marks a political stand. Mariko Sato's study on return migrant women in Somaliland explores the context of return migration, connecting to the chapters of Bjarnesen and Armila et al. on migrant youth. The optimism and willingness to generate change can be channelled through a commercial business, but aspiration and hope can be read as a political move of commitment – that in Sato's study was not always welcomed by the locals, however. To be perceived as a viable threat to existing power dynamics is, of course, evidence that these women have political potential. Tilo Grätz examines the agencies of young radio and media professionals, showing how they build and maintain relations with their audiences as a way to securing and opening life chances in the Republic of Benin.

The entire section challenges the distinction between deep and shallow commitments. The authors examine how following an opportunity or flow of events may change the path of one's life, or put it in danger. Yet the discussions also indicate that regarding these engagements as void of ethical reflection or aspiration to contribute to the wider community is a hasty conclusion. For example, the simple act of demanding an embodied right to be present and to be hailed as a citizen with dignity (Brown 2015) can be radical in the case of migration. This can apply within a city, too, due to socio-economic distances, as expressed by the student protestors in South Africa who claim that black students in elite universities, even when natives of the same city, can when on campus live with "a permanent sense of exile. You don't belong" (Mupotsa, this volume, 24).

Embeddedness

The third section addresses the multiple ways in which youth engage in existing, formal structures of power, exploring how the normative notions of political participation are experienced in contemporary Africa, as numbers of young people do engage with, and seek access to, political institutions and public political space. In his chapter, Abdoulaye Sounaye examines the emergence of the Salafi youth movement in Niamey, Niger, and the ways in which piety activists on university campuses consider their role in the promotion of religious revivalism in the society as a whole. Through religious commitment a new entitlement to political advocacy has opened itself for these young people. Eija Ranta has interviewed young Kenyans active in the 2013 elections, who now wonder how limited the role of their agency was and will be in the future. Ranta's youth are disillusioned but not entirely pessimistic, and they do envision room for change beyond ethnicized party politics.

In his chapter, Ivo Mhike discusses the views and reflections of young Zimbabweans on their experiences in the state-sponsored National Youth

Service Programme in the early 2000s. The programme was portrayed as an opportunity for youth to participate in national empowerment, but the testimonies of Mikhe's informants' bear witness to acts of violence, and circumstances that make participation far from voluntary. In contrast, Päivi Armila, Marko Kananen and Tiina Sotkasiira discuss Somali diaspora youth in the United States and Finland, who actively seek opportunities to participate in their countries of location. Abebaw Yirga Adamu and Randi Rønning Balsvik study student politics in Ethiopia in a historical perspective.

Þóra Björnsdóttir and Jonina Einarsdóttir explore the ways in which development policy approaches children's rights, and participation turns into development practice, and the children's views thereof, in today's Ghana. As in the chapters by Jorgensen and Laine, Suurpää and Ltifi, Björnsdóttir and Einarsdóttir argue that there is a dimension to age-based hierarchies that needs further examination. Often the respect for tradition and elders is seen as a culturally valuable trait that ideas about individual freedoms challenge. Resistance to overthrowing cultural values and traditions, like respect for elders, gives rise to acutely important discussions across the continent, from Boko Haram to violence against LGBTI youth (Ratele 2016). These concerns were expressed by young and old alike in Björnsdóttir and Einarsdóttir study, which also suggests that such juxtaposition has been overcome and children's rights can be upheld without disputing the importance of respect to Ghanaian core values. Nationalistic resistance to allegedly 'Western' influences are discussed throughout the book as sites of important negotiation and politicized battles over the history of the present, where decolonization is but one means to shape those values.

Lastly, Claudia Mitchell, Naydene de Lange and Relebohile Moletsane show how university students were able to challenge sexual violence in South Africa in practical and locally relevant ways. Here, formal methods of influencing policy were used but, by prioritizing the young women's own views and voices, in ways that they felt empowering. What remains to be further explored, by both researchers and organizations, is how to act as a good ally and supportive collaborator to these kinds of semi-autonomous youth groups navigating formal power.

Some of the chapters here show that difficulties are felt by young people when attempting to engage in meaningful political activity in the formal sphere. A political climate where suspicion of manipulative politics overshadows youthful activity tarnishes its participants. In the general political atmosphere of disillusionment and corruption, it is important to remember that the circumstances for agency are not of the young generation's own making. Agency and lack of it needs to be historicized.

One of the lessons of the chapters is that agency can be studied as both uniquely individual and shaped by its circumstances, a paradox that is actually not a paradox at all (Jungar and Oinas 2011). A sense of achievement and hope may come from a conservative religious group as in the case of Niger (Sounaye, this volume), or a project that addresses important issues for the youth themselves yet is labelled 'Western' as in cases of feminism (Mitchell, de Lange and Moletsane, this volume) or child rights (Björnsdóttir and Einarsdóttir, this volume). What these share, however, is the scepticism directed at them that suggests that the movements are orchestrated and manipulated by foreign sources of power, rendering the young mere pawns. The joy of unique ownership of the engagement felt by those young people involved can, however, be genuine and should not be mistrusted, as ideas have always travelled and generated new ones. Such agency and sense of ownership becomes analytically interesting and intelligible when studied against the options and the material and discursive parameters available in the time and place. While the book emphasizes youthful agency its key message is that any engagement takes place in a context, and social scientists are capable of examining the expressed experiences and how they are historically shaped; the analytical lens does not require dismissal of the affective and the personal. We hope that the book has succeeded in being faithful to the informants while expanding analysis in time and space, and connecting the cases presented here to other research. Although this volume focuses on Africa, it is a collective effort to reach a better understanding of what is it like to be young today, and what the making of tomorrow's yesterday means to them.

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PART 1

Envisioning

∵

A Question of Power

Danai S. Mupotsa

Introduction

In this essay, I reflect on the 2015 and early 2016 student activism at the University of the Witwatersrand, in the context of a national movement in South Africa. I am particularly interested in questions of form, narrative and aesthetics. Many of the acts of protest have been circulated through digital technologies offering a wide audience access to the events through spectacular images. These events have also been assembled and articulated through specific kinds of form, such as the autobiographical – where students invoke the category 'I' to articulate aspects of private life that animate their moves against structural injustices. I read these various animations of 'the political' in the same register that I read the novel, *A Question of Power* by Bessie Head (1974). While I do not offer a close textual reading of the novel, I propose that we read the various scenes of refusal animated by these students through an autobiographical lens that, like Head's novel, offers us a splintered category of 'I' that both demands a politics of recognition while simultaneously refusing and disrupting the possibilities of that very wish.

Bessie Head's (1974) partly autobiographical account stays with me because of the ways a range of spectacular structural injustices are narrativized through a powerful dialogue between the public and the private. The novel begs us to sit with the quotidian as political, the structural as libidinal and the spatial as affective. This essay follows this lead in deliberating on the recent student protests in South Africa (see Pilane 2016). On 9 March 2015 a frustrated student at the University of Cape Town threw faeces at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. This wet and smelly demonstration would precipitate mass mobilizations across the country calling for free, quality education, decolonization and an end to outsourcing. Chumani Maxwele's account of the incident takes a biographical form (see Fairbanks 2015). The sense of injustice that he felt that day begins with his rural birth, and his encounters with South Africa's racialized geographies. Despite the promise of transformation made in 1994 when democracy was legislated, the lived experience of many who live in the country continues to be structured by apartheid's arrangements of race, sex, gender and labour.

Chumani's biography offers useful orientations for understanding the conditions that motivated so many young people to protest. The biographical in this sense refers to a linear narrative of a life, where an individual is born 'free' according to the legislated promise made at the end of apartheid. As the story goes, this young and 'free' South African comes to recognize the impossibility of this deal, often felt through experiences with poor education and poor delivery of infrastructure and services such as water, electricity and shelter. The image of a free South Africa, post the racial makeover of 1994 that so starkly shaped the promise this generation carried for the present / future, collapses due to these lived experiences. This biographical tone is also a narrative of becoming, or *bildungsroman*.

We can use the recent biography by Malaika wa Azania (2014) as an example. *Memoirs of a Born Free* takes waAzania's account of her life as evidence of why the 'Rainbow Nation' is a lie, because it offered a democracy made empty by the absence of economic freedom. WaAzania's account of the disappointing present takes specific aim at education. This should not surprise us, as it could be assumed that, under democratic conditions, previously disadvantaged populations would have increased upward mobility through education. The evidence is to the contrary, as a combination of the legacy of apartheid and neoliberal economic policies have instead produced a public education system that systematically continues to reproduce inequality (see Alexander and Vally 2012).

Describing a schooling landscape, Aslam Fataar (2009) refers to the long distances that black students travel from informal settlements and townships to the suburbs and inner-cities where they can study at more desirable, private or former 'white-only' schools. Fataar reads these movements as a refusal to be "trapped by geography within what they understand to be the anti-aspirational material of township schools" (2009, 3). The experience of moving through these various geographies produces what Fataar describes as "an affective disconnection, born of a disjuncture between their places of living and their spaces of schooling." (ibid.) Vuyani Pambo, a student at the University of the Witwatersrand recalls this very experience as "bipolar". Vuyani travelled from the township of Soweto to a private boy's high school in Sandton, an upper income suburb, every day:

> You move around with a permanent sense of exile. You don't belong.
> In your neighbourhood or at school. You try and negotiate two worlds
> which don't come together, set apart geographically, economically, in a
> way that they never meet. And here you are, communicating [with] both

> in the physical and the psychological, in the questioning and answering of these two spaces.
>
> CHIGUMADZI 2015, 3

In Cape Town in March 2015, Chumani brought a bucket of shit that was sitting on the side of the road in Khayelitsha and travelled with it to the university campus where he was studying Political Science and Sociology. As he hurled the bucket towards the face of the bronze statue, he was heard shouting, "Where are our heroes and ancestors?" A great deal of commotion followed as students mobilized around this event, calling their movement #RhodesMustFall. This movement demanded that along with the removal of the statue, the university should be forced to practice its commitments to transformation. Transformation in South African public discourse is often understood to refer to *inclusion*. #RhodesMustFall would get mobilized by young, black, queer womxn whose insights into the project of the university as concerned with transformation *as inclusion* would recognize it immediately as problematic, or "sticky" (see Ahmed 2012). #RhodesMustFall was led by black queer womxn who took that stickiness on through their occupation of a university building now known as Azania House where they read, debated and considered what a radical curriculum, pedagogy and institutional life for the university might look like (Sebambo 2015).

Sianne Ngai (2005) describes 'animatedness' in a useful manner. Ngai begins with stop-motion animated technologies, referring to states of being in stop and being in motion, or being moved in all the senses implied. For many people, it was through various animated technologies that they came in closest proximity to student protests in South Africa (see Benazir 2015, Hendricks 2015, Mnisi 2015, Patel 2016 and Pilane 2015 for example). To animate is to give life to something. Ngai gives us ventriloquism and other manipulations of the body, in which cases the body moves 'automatically'. As a young academic and teacher at Wits, Ngai's definition struck me as particularly useful as a means to understand what our students were doing in the months leading up to the arrival of a national movement in October of 2015. Students took to repeating songs and images as a means of triggering feelings that existed in their bodies and experiences, which produced such spectacular and unexpected results. The repetition of these automations trigger densely in ways that I hope to explore in this chapter.

The film *Decolon I Sing Wits: An Act of Epistemic Disobedience* (Kaganof 2015) is an example of such triggering. The film features Wits student activists as they confront the university management about poor infrastructure for

students with limited mobility. The film also captures student reading groups, and their demands are often animated through references to figures like Steve Biko who, as a student activist himself, articulated the political discourse of Black Consciousness (see Biko 1987; Naidoo, L 2015) that students are communicating with today. The film uses symbols, art, architecture, statues and language to animate the audience. Students appear automatic in their repetition of these very same symbols, for instance, when they are presented repeating freedom songs from the 1970s and 80s. These automatic repetitions are rather spectacular, and they move the viewer from one state of being to another. As minor subjects, they are presented through hypervisibility, part-emphasis of the gaze of the camera being laid on the anxiety that the performance of black racial difference induces.

I was never actually ready for what happened at Wits on 14 October 2015. I was driving to work and was stopped from entering. Students had blocked all of the entrances in demonstration of what it is like for them, to feel like they do not belong at the university, or what I describe as "the violence of living-in-being-stopped" (Mupotsa 2015a). The protest was mobilized around the university senate agreement to increase student fees, which would ostensibly affirm the exclusion of many poor black students. This protest followed one a week earlier when students and workers protested against outsourcing. As such, while many of us could not have anticipated that this day would be the beginning of a national shutdown, there were important discussions in place that demonstrated that students understood the connections between the absence of transformation of the university and the treatment of workers.

The student activism at the University of the Witwatersrand can be analysed in the context of a national movement, where students took up the category 'I' to articulate aspects of private life that animate moves against structural injustice. I read these various animations of 'the political' in the same register that I read *A Question of Power.* In this novel, the protagonist is a South African woman living in exile in Botswana. Elizabeth's narrative of a life mirrors that of the author, which is why it is often read as autobiography. Like Head, Elizabeth is exiled because she has a black father and a white mother, making her birth illegal.

What the novel demonstrates is an account of racial, sexual, gendered, economic and cultural colonization and inequality, yet the narrative lays emphasis on her psychological struggles. Michela Borgaza (2010) describes this book as presenting a trauma as a "life world", where structural conditions are presented through dialectical struggles with different and often contradictory temporalities. I want to consider the biographical as a strategy used by students to animate their political movement. I want to suggest that, while we can in part see their activism as made in a 'moment' of awakening to the failed promise of

democracy, there are perhaps other uses or purposes to this strategy. I do this in part due to the way that the biographical carries a sentimental tone, a tone that we see mirrored in South African consumer publics that animate the idea of the 'rainbow nation'. To this end, the use of sentiment to animate a political movement or revolution is something that should present different characteristics, should it offer different results. Through a reading of the aesthetics and performance of protest, I want to suggest that the questions of power that students have demonstrated to universities are caught in dialectical struggles about the university, its promises and institutional life; with their awareness of the impossibility of recognition.

"African Lives Are Still Cheap in Africa"

On 6 October 2015, students, academic staff and workers marched through the city of Johannesburg to the entrance of the university to protest against outsourcing (Patel 2015). A coalition assembled from these various parties had long existed, following the introduction of outsourcing in 2000. Outsourcing meant that workers who were formerly employed by the university had their services sold to various private companies that since this point have brokered their labour. The services that the university sold to these labour brokers included: cleaning, landscaping, moving, catering, electrical, plumbing, waste removal, welding, carpentry and building, painting, air-conditioning and lift maintenance services (Wits Workers Solidarity Committee 2015).

If we need a perverse example of what neoliberal policies can do in furthering the extent of unequal conditions and relations at an institution, the case of outsourcing at Wits is a strong one. A report published in 2011 (Wits Workers Solidarity Committee 2011) demonstrates this by highlighting how workers were systematically segregated from the university community through this process. This point is one sentimentally re-articulated in the poem written by Wits student Anzio Jacobs titled "Why Can't My Grandmother Use that Toilet?"

> The repulsion I felt the day I was told by the head of my department that the work of people who had skin that resembled mine could not be understood – had my insides knot.
> JACOBS 2015

On 6 October, this coalition delivered a Workers' Charter to university management. The Charter illustrates the ways that the university continues to reproduce apartheid, making the following demands for workers: a living wage;

a secure job; decent, safe and healthy working conditions; democratic collective organization so that they can speak and act together; a safe place where they can leave children who need care; and access to the education facilities (Wits Workers Solidarity Committee 2015). Thembi Luckett, a Wits student, and Deliwe Mzobe, an outsourced worker, both actively involved in the protests that came to be known as #FeesMustFall, demonstrate that while the protests are largely understood through the lens of a student movement, outsourced university workers were also key actors (2016, 94). Workers occupied buildings and marched with students, amplifying both the number of hashtags in circulation, adding #OutsourcingMustFall #EndOutsourcing, but also amplifying the range of demands that students were making to universities and to the state. Along with other victories, the decision in principle for universities to commit to insourcing outsourced support staff members is one very important victory that has been made. In Thembi and Deliwe's conversation, they discuss the relationship between workers and students, and why these figures would place their bodies on the line, so to speak, for each other (Luckett and Mzobe 2016, 96). The Charter plays the same relation too, also re-figuring the worker as family relation (Wits Workers Solidarity Committee 2015).

One of the *bwo*s involved in organizing the October 6 Movement was the anonymous art collective known as Project Hoopoe[1]. Project Hoopoe had been producing street art on the Wits campus since August of 2015 when they made work concerned with the anniversaries of the 1945 Hiroshima, the 2014 Gaza and the 2012 Marikana massacres. The series of images sequentially titled "Fig. 2.1. African Lives are Cheap in Africa", "Fig. 2.2. Suspended Evolution" and "Fig. 2.3. #Oct6" features their work. Project Hoopoe describes their project as one inspired by the apathy and elitism of students at Wits and their work specifically intends to interrupt this apathy by making sharp comment on questions of power. As such, their intention is to agitate politically.

Writing against the use of sentiment in or as a strategy of protest, James Baldwin's (1984) essay, "Everybody's Protest Novel", describes a particular kind of expression that dishonestly makes us 'feel'. Lauren Berlant describes this more specifically as a "liberal sentimentality that promotes individual acts of identification based on collective group membership", one that in this particular structure "has been deployed mainly by the culturally privileged to humanize those very subjects who are also, and at the same time, reduced to cliché within the reigning regimes of entitlement of value" (1998, 636). I do not read Anzio's poem or the various expressions of familial relation made between the

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1   I would like to express my gratitude to Project Hoopoe: for generously sharing your work for this chapter and the cover of the book; for your work in general.
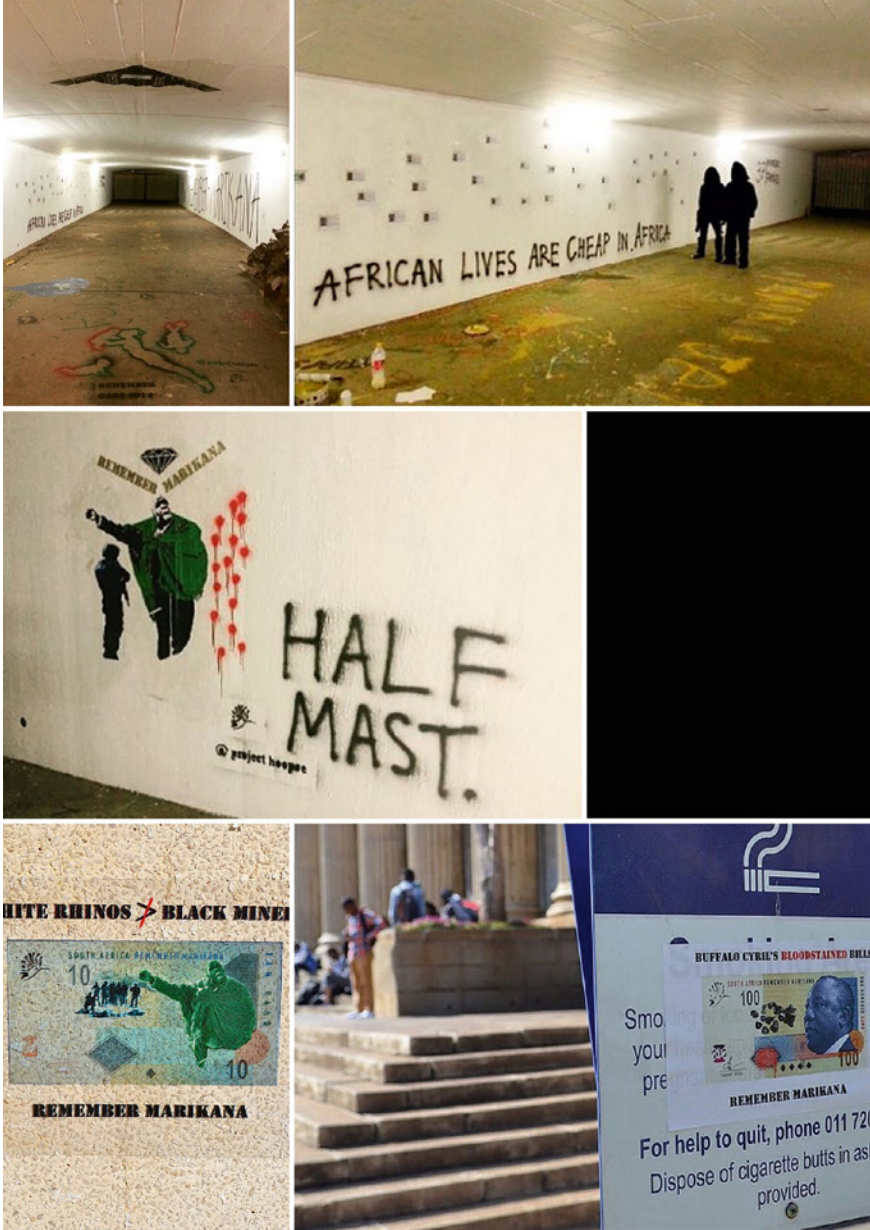
FIGURE 2.1   *African lives are cheap in Africa*
         IMAGE: PROJECT HOOPOE

FIGURE 2.2　*Suspended evolution*
IMAGE: PROJECT HOOPOE

FIGURE 2.3 *#Oct6*
        IMAGE: PROJECT HOOPOE

worker and the student as operating within this structure, but I can offer one good example of what Baldwin and Berlant might be referring to. Following several statements and complaints made by academic staff about the presence of private para-military security on campus in 2016, the vice chancellor of the university published an open letter in response. This response offers us the figure of the 'grandfather from Limpopo':

> Let me explain the net effect of stopping the registration process. We have two forms of registration, online and face-to-face, with telephone registration as a back-up to be instituted when required. Forcing us to cancel face-to-face registration adversely affected the poorest of those who wanted to register. Online registration enabled the middle and upper middle classes to continue with the process. They have online facilities and they have credit cards. They were not adversely affected, even if some may have been slightly inconvenienced. But the old man from Limpopo, who scraped whatever monies he could raise from family, friends and his community to ensure that his grandson registered, was severely impacted. He and his grandson travelled for hours, only to be told that he could not register because some group of activists had decided that they would shut down registration unless all historic debt had been cancelled and free education immediately granted. There were many such people on that day, and there were many more throughout the week. All attempts to get protesters to allow the registration to proceed came to naught.
>
> HABIB 2016

This open letter, while directed at colleagues, was published in national media, suggesting that it was not necessarily colleagues or protesting students that were meant to be moved by it. The story of the Limpopo grandfather was meant to move a broader public that might otherwise find the presence of para-military security on the university campus to be in poor taste. Many important responses to Habib followed (see Vally and Godsell 2016; Böhmke 2016). As a performance in liberal sentimentality, Habib's intervention was mechanical, lethargic and unmoving precisely because it so openly serves the interests of settling the guilt of his actual audience.

"Fig. 2.1, African Lives are Cheap in Africa" is the title I am using to refer to a series of works that Project Hoopoe produced in August of 2015 just after the group was formed. In the top left corner we are under a bridge that connects east and west campuses where the group has placed a number of their pieces. On one wall, the graffiti features their mark, the hoopoe bird, and written in free hand are the words "AFRICAN LIVES ARE CHEAP IN AFRICA," while on the other side it is written "REMEMBER MARIKANA."

Just below this image is another piece that features 'Mambush'. Mgcineni Noki, known as Mambush, was one of the thousands of miners who went on strike in August 2012 in Marikana. What followed was a state-sanctioned massacre of thirty-four of these miners. The stencilled figure of Mambush that appeared all over the city of Johannesburg, before it appeared here, connects the Wits campus and its struggles with various other social movements that use his apparition to mark their connected dispossessions. As Prishani Naidoo demonstrates, "Marikana inaugurated a new cycle of struggles" for us in South Africa (2015, 441).

Project Hoopoe repeats the stencil of Mambush but does something else, through the use of a different form. They produce two bank notes, a ten rand and a one hundred rand. The ten rand note features Mambush and the other miners, and above the note they connect the lack of value placed on the life of the miner in relation to the life of the white rhino. The advocacy around the white rhino in South Africa has been described as the conservation success story of the twentieth century and it is a strong example of how liberal sentimentality works. Various campaigns that spread particular kinds of affects in consumer publics are what these students are playing with, or rubbing against. On the 'more valuable' one hundred rand note we instead have the image of Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, who serves on the board of Lonmin, the company that the miners were striking against. Ramaphosa allegedly sent emails to senior government officials during the strike asking them to forcefully deal with the miners, whom he described as "criminals" (Desai 2013). Ramaphosa is a figure of post-apartheid's neoliberal structural adjustments and its successes. He was once the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers during the insurrectionary period of the 1980s, when he led miners in protests that were meant to make the nation ungovernable (see Moodie 2010).

The image of Mambush 'agitates' or animates us in Ngai's (2005) sense. His image is reproduced through a stencil, which is an easily reproducible technology, offered as a still image that moves *around* in its reproduction but also moves *us* in a "surprising interplay between the passionate and the mechanical" (2005, 91). Ngai's project is not simply concerned with how emotions are made, or how affect is spread but is more precisely concerned with foregrounding the connections between race and emotions; that is, in the relation between 'animation' and 'agitation' from which we might become a 'political agitator'. This shift would more specifically refer to a transition from being a body that moves automatically, to one that moves towards "an oppositional consciousness required for the making of a political movement" (Ngai 2005, 96).

Let us turn to the second series of images that I refer to as "Fig. 2.2 Suspended Evolution" in direct reference to the posters made by Project Hoopoe on the bottom left corner. These posters re-produce the cover of Habib's (2013)

book *South Africa's Suspended Revolution*, where he offers an account of the failed promises of the transition to democracy. This series of works went up in September 2015 in commemoration of Steve Biko, whose face is featured in the middle of the piece on the bottom right, between the faces of Patrick Lumumba and Thomas Sankara. When Project Hoopoe posted a photograph of the image on Twitter they included the hashtags #BeMartyrWorthy #WhereAreTheLeaders? (Project Hoopoe 2015). The comment on Habib's institution made through the posters sits neatly against the question of who the political agitators of our present might be. Together, these pieces place the question of the university's intellectual and political project in direct conversation with the failures of the democratic project. These images respond then, not co-incidentally, to the piece shown in two frames in this series that presents an image of the vice chancellor turning a young black child away from the university.

In September 2015, Wits scientists at a research centre that is remarkably named The Evolutionary Studies Institute announced the discovery of a new human ancestor that they named 'Naledi', which means 'star' in SeSotho. This discovery was followed with an elaborate celebration of the university's 'excellence' at an event that featured speeches by both Adam Habib and Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa who was photographed kissing the mouth of Naledi's fossil (Wits News 2015). Project Hoopoe offers us the evolutionary scale from homo primus to homo sapiens. The figure that follows has the title WITSUS STUDENTUS, who is turning backwards and away from HABIBUS IGNORAMUS. Naledi is not 'homo', which we might presume to indicate that she is a figure that exceeds the aspiration for the category of the human made within this teleological structure. Witsus Studentus has written above her head, "find one old star, lose a thousand others". This piece was only up for a few hours, as university management had it painted over almost immediately, which is what we see on closer inspection of the posters of South Africa's suspended evolution: the image of the worker who paints over this work.

The series "Fig. 2.3 #Oct6" repeat the image of the worker painting over Project Hoopoe's work, with the image of Habib pointing his finger to direct him to this task. This image is again featured in the posters made for the protests on 6 October. The posters plastered on the walls of the university give testimony of the difficulties that workers face, along with their demands. The canvas under the bridge with this later body of work that frames these posters now reads "African Lives are *Still* Cheap in Africa". Students and workers carried these posters as they sang and marched on that day, animating what would come a week later.

The subtle work of Project Hoopoe demonstrates a use of biography and sentiment that agitates precisely because of its perceptive relation to language and repetition. The repetition of a figure like Biko or Mambush, read with the 'girl

child' Naledi, do not act as simple referents to make us identify with an abstract and suffering other. Witsus Studentus, in turning away from evolution, becomes a figure of animacy rather than 'life' in Mel Y Chan's provocative way. For Chan, animacy refuses the binary systems of difference in which she includes "dynamism/statis, life/death, subject/object, speech/nonspeech, human/animal, natural body/cyborg" (2012, 3). This vision or version of biopolitics also troubles teleological configurations of the human. It is this consideration that I would like to take forward in my discussion of the university as an institution.

Conclusion: Solomon's House

Wilfulness involves persistence in the face of having been brought down, where simply to "keep going" or to "keep coming up" is to be stubborn and obstinate. Mere persistence can be an act of disobedience.

AHMED 2014, 1–2

32. This is love for comrade bae. The clever people will write and speak about you in poor accounts of "the students," "the workers," "the teachers" and accuse you of wishing without evidence. But I see you and your dense will and imagination. I see you taking knowledge/power on like a badass.

MUPOTSA 2015b

On 14 October 2015, students blocked various campus entrances at Wits, refusing to be moved. They explained that they were rejecting the senate decision on fee increases because it meant their exclusion from the university. For me personally, the first day and night were remarkable because it felt like nothing I had ever felt before. In his initial comments on the protests, the vice chancellor dismissed the protest as a couple of hundred students. But it was thousands, who were joined by further students from other campuses in the city in the following days. By Friday, the university was shut down. Other universities initiated their own shutdowns in the days that would follow. When the Minister of Higher Education announced a 6% cap on university fee increases which the students refused, students took their protests off-campus.

On 21 October, students from UCT and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology CPUT made their way towards Parliament, with the intention of being heard by the Minister of Higher Education. At Wits, students had settled into their occupation of Solomon House, the main administrative building formerly known as Senate House, when they received images of the chaos in Cape Town. Tyres were burning over the statue of Louis Botha that stands at

the entrance of the parliament building. Louis Botha was the first president of the Union of South Africa, marking the end of the colonial period. Under his leadership, the logic of racial difference would be articulated in policies such as the 'racial colour bar' that limited the professions that black people could take up, for instance. These policies and the affective / intellectual work they produced would be foundational to the formal legislating of apartheid in 1948.

Enraged by the face of Botha, students continued, breaking in through a gate with their placards, singing the demand "Fees Must Fall!" The riot police were agitated, so a group of white students formed a human shield to protect black students at the front. This strategy was one that students at many universities had been using when confronted with violence. The riot police fired stun grenades. The students ran. For those of us on the other side of the country, it was like a dream. We received digital messages of broken skin, as we called around for legal and medical expertize. While these students ran, they continued to sing freedom songs, "*siyaya, noba besidubula*" (we move ahead, even as they shoot us). And they did. As did students in other parts of the country, despite the intimidation that they faced from the army and the police.

Solomon Mahlangu was an Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) cadre who was hanged by the apartheid government for a crime he had not committed in 1979. Mahlangu was only twenty three years old and is supposed to have said these last words: "My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight." Soon after his death, the African National Congress (ANC) used a small piece of land on a farm in Tanzania to open a college that they named Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO). This college would see the arrival of many student activists in exile, but would also be a place of experimentation with regards to curriculum and pedagogy (Serote 1992).

Fig. 2.4 Solomon's Face, is a final series of images that features the work of Project Hoopoe. They are all images of the same thing, which was made through the stencilled figure of Solomon's face. Solomon's face was also stencilled onto the central administrative building of the university to mark the students' occupation of that space. The piece was placed at the same time as the words "Free Education Now" were written onto the back wall under the bridge. The work of mourning / memorializing political figures often instigates the forms of sentiment that Baldwin and Berlant critique as lethargic. In contrast, the image of Solomon's face has an atmosphere.

During the protests, it was through freedom songs that revolutionary ideas from the past / present filled the atmosphere. *Iyhooo Solomon* thunders through the body forcefully still, even though the occupation is currently over. Teresa Brennan begins her book with the question, "is there anyone who has

FIGURE 2.4 *Solomon's face*
IMAGE: PROJECT HOOPOE

not, at least once, walked into a room and 'felt the atmosphere'?" (2004, 1). For Brennan, the "transmission of affect" refers to the relation between the body and signification or, in our case, the body that gets moved, and the sign like that of Solomon's face. Affects are, in her sense, judgements, which make them different from feelings: "by affect, I mean the physiological shift accompanying a judgement" (Brennan 2004, 5).

The proposed fee increase was scrapped by the end of October 2015. Despite this, many students continued their occupation of Solomon House because it was a space where they could imagine the project of the university. It was in meetings at Solomon House that several workshops on labour, knowledge, sexual difference and power would occur. #WitsFeesMustFall would later create a free library where photocopies of books were shared and read amongst students. The space was one for communication, with a large screen that broadcast live tweets and images related to the national movement. Some students accepted the 0% deal and made the move to continue with business as usual, but others continued with the purpose of free education. Early one morning in January 2016, the group of students that had continued to live in the central concourse of Solomon House was forcefully removed by private security forces. The free library was destroyed. The image of Solomon Mahlangu was painted over. Defending these actions, the university management denied that students had been assaulted and referred to them as 'hooligans'.

In the performance of liberal sentimentality, the mourning of memorialized others operationalizes their loss to the work of national rhetoric, or "national sentimentality" (Berlant 2001, 53) where "'others' are ghosted for a good cause" (ibid., 51). The symbolic erasure of Solomon House arrives at the same time as the grandfather from Limpopo, 'ghosting' the living subjects, or living students. As a response to their evacuation and the subsequent presence of private security on campus, students offered a performance theatre piece. Along with the singing, students arrived with cardboard tombstones. On these tombstones were the student numbers of financially excluded students. The second number indicated their current debt to the university. Said another way, these students took up the social deathmaking that structures their relationship to the university, and rather than let the university grieve the loss of their exclusion – as it does every year, while it continues, through these actions, to mourn the loss of a grounding object that is in this case, the self – they refuse the aggression of the university's usual practice of sentimentality.

In the months leading up to the protests in 2015, many students took to reading groups. One of the preoccupations of their reading was the intellectual and political field of Afro-pessimism. Black Consciousness marks a move against the category of being 'non-white' toward Blackness as a political, intellectual and cultural identity. Afro-pessimism makes a different move, as blackness

comes to signal a structural and libidinal position that carries disposability, or the site of ontological death. The conversations that students were having in Solomon House sat in this point of intensity as they considered the institution of the university. Fred Moten writes from this bundle of wills, describing his preference for *life* and *optimism* over *death* and *pessimism*, Moten chooses "exhaustion, as a mode or form of way of life, which is to say sociability" (2013, 738, emphasis original).

I will reassemble the set of images I collect in this essay: the biographical, where one comes of age to realize the failure of the rainbow nation; the biographical-familial, where one calls upon oneself in relation to one's figurative kin-and-as-other; the haunting-and-as-mourning of revolutionary figures like Biko, Mambush, the worker, Naledi, Solomon and the student; and finally, the performance of protests as both living and dying, or "exhaustion" in Moten's sense. Naledi as a figure that accumulates this assemblage turns away from the humanizing gesture of uplift and inclusion, just as she is sent away. This kind of mourning animates and agitates a range of questions of power that the failed democracy continues, sentimentally, to misrecognize.

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Friendship and Youth Activism in Pre-revolutionary Egypt

Henri Onodera

Introduction

In April 2007, I joined Muhammad (26) and Said (28) in a small, dimly-lit restaurant in downtown Cairo. A leftist political activist, Muhammad was a sharp-witted character who proclaimed himself an anarcho-communist. Although his online writing stirred up the occasional controversy, he was respected in activist circles for his political blogging and for his persistent and courageous actions at the front line of democratic struggle, including fighting riot police and *balṭagiyya* (plain clothes 'thugs' hired by the police), which had resulted in his being detained several times over the past few years. His friend Said, a young Arab Nationalist, was currently unemployed but active in independent groups. We entered into diversified and rather heated debates on current politics in the noisy, crammed and smoky atmosphere. The restaurant, which was also one of the few downtown places that served beer to its clientele, provided a realm of experience that provided a stark contrast to the 5th Cairo Anti-War Conference at the Journalists' Syndicate which I had just left. The latter event had been held annually since the outbreak of the Iraq war, gathering participants from Egypt and abroad, and represented one of the major collective efforts by the otherwise factionalized political opposition in Egypt.

Muhammad and Said boycotted the Cairo Conference in 2007. The main reason for their disengagement was the active and public role the Muslim Brotherhood took in both the conference's organizing committee and during the conference itself. The two abstainers could not fathom why some of their fellow Leftists, such as Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialists, should want to co-organize the conference in alliance with the Brotherhood, even on the pretext that revolution in Egypt could not materialize without collaborating with by far the largest opposition movement in the country. On the other hand, Muhammad admitted that he and Said were not entirely natural companions either: he usually hates Nasserists and Arab nationalists, such as Said, for idolizing Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's charismatic leader of the

post-independence era. Muhammad admitted, however, that he appreciated the vast socioeconomic reforms aimed at building an educated middle class which had taken place under Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s and had also enabled upward social mobility for his parents. Yet the regime had simultaneously hit hard at Nasser's political rivals and dissenters for a number of years, including leading figures of Egypt's communist movement. Muhammad further deplored what he saw as nepotistic practices in current Nasserist groups, a line of criticism that soon encompassed most opposition parties and also some NGOs. Said, having had dire experiences of party politics himself, could only agree.

These kinds of friendship relations were forged under particular historical circumstances. Prior to the January 25, 2011 revolution, Egypt had witnessed an unprecedented wave of pro-democracy mobilization during Hosni Mubarak's presidency since 1981. During the previous decade, scores of young people, who were mostly born and raised under Mubarak's rule, participated in public dissent against the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), at times forging new youth coalitions at the fringes of larger processes of contentious politics, such as the pro-democracy movement and burgeoning labourers' strike movements. In this chapter, I do not reiterate what has been stated time and again, that the 2011 uprisings were long in the making and the younger generations of Egypt's political opposition played important roles during the preceding decade (e.g., El-Mahdi 2014; Cole 2014). Nor do I suggest that the important roles friendship relations play in public mobilization is a novel phenomenon in Egypt. Rather, I cast a closer look at the dynamics of trust, belonging and everyday solidarities, or what are often regarded as the 'ideal' values of friendship, in the context of oppositional youth activism in the late Mubarak era. More generally, my focus rests on young Cairenes' lived experiences in the context of being involved in the wider pro-democracy movement that emerged in Egypt public life in the 2000s. This was mainly dominated by the so-called 'secular' opposition, including various Leftist, Liberal and Arab Nationalist orientations, and thus coexisted with the more weighty opposition, namely, the Muslim Brotherhood, whose role as the largest and most organized opposition movement cannot be overlooked (Wickham 2002). Thus, the restricted focus in this chapter does not aim to belittle the role of the Islamists in contentious politics in the late Mubarak era; rather, it offers a glimpse into the everyday lives of those 'youth activists' some years before they were made famous and celebrated due to the revolutionary events in 2011 and beyond. As will be shown, friendship relations were for them in many ways invaluable in the volatile circumstances of opposition politics but, at the same time, a conspicuously fragile source for their continued collective actions.

Values of Friendship

Despite the salient importance of friends in the everyday lives of young Egyptian activists, there is little research on the issue. My interest in friendship emerged during 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork on youth activism in Cairo between 2007 and 2011 (Onodera 2015). Regardless of their political involvement or lack thereof, it was clear that most young people in Egypt – as elsewhere – cherished the company of good friends. This observation, in all its banality, assists the recognition that, in the lifeworlds of young Egyptians who have learned to live in relative autonomy from their natal families, friendship ties forged at school, university and through leisure activities provide immediate experiences of trust, reciprocity and shared everyday existence. The relative (and historical) lack of ethnographic research on friendship partly stems from the scholarly preoccupation with kinship, although, as is often pointed out, the differences between these modes of social belonging cannot be taken for granted (Desai and Killick 2013b, 4–8; Grätz 2011, 359–361). At the least, Bell and Coleman suggest, the analytic of friendship can serve the aim of examining "social relations that may include but are not reducible to kinship; that are sustained beyond single or short-term encounters; that involve the search for some form of sentiment or at least empathy and common ground between persons" (1999b, 16). In comparison to the ascribed dimension of being a member of one's family, friendship relations seem, they argue, to be

> defined solely on the basis of the social contract which really exists and is continually worked upon: participation depends on the relationship created over time between the particular people involved, while what brings people together in friendship may not be what keeps them together.
>
> BELL and COLEMAN 1999b, 6

In public political life, it is hard to overestimate the importance of friendship relations in the lives of young Egyptian activist in the late 2000s. Acting as they were in the contentious sphere of politics where the perpetual state oversight of, and security infiltration into, their daily lives was a real concern, friendship relations provided them with vital experiences of trust, loyalty and belonging. At pivotal moments, such as in clashes with the police or in detention, good friends were those who could be trusted and whose solidarity could be counted upon. Undoubtedly, there was a tacit deal among young activists to go and protest in the case of anyone getting arrested, but at these junctures, individuals were wont to rely on the fact that, at the minimum, good friends would try and drag them from the arms of the Central Security Forces, if possible; they

would certainly chase the police wagon so as to locate the exact police station to which they were being taken. In cases of detention, close friends were actively involved in contacting family members and journalists, designing online banners and circulating messages over the Internet so as to make the case as public as possible. Friends would also be active in helping to organize solidarity protests calling for release and, later, a welcome home party.

For the young activists, acts of public dissent – such as illegal street protesting, graffiti and political blogging – in themselves served to differentiate them from most Egyptians, who actively disengaged from anything 'political' so as to avoid reactions from the police state. Sharing moments of dissent, of facing injustice and of everyday solidarities served to forge concrete friendship relations that could endure over time. Muhammad and Said befriended one another while being confined in the same cell after having been detained during a street protest in 2006. Said's large family, encompassing a number of siblings, brought in various kinds of food almost daily which he then shared with fellow inmates, amounting to a 'feast' in Muhammad's opinion. Despite the odds stacked against them of ideological strife and political rivalry, and their different friendship circles, they gradually developed a sense of acceptance of one another, and caught up occasionally at opposition events or, as in the late April evening of 2007 mentioned above, their preferred restaurant. They had many stories to share and reminisce about due their participation in the pro-democracy movement. Often labelled the 'Kifaya' Movement (Arabic for 'Enough!'), this had emerged into Egypt's public life in the run-up period to the presidential elections in 2005. At least momentarily, it managed to conjoin several, even competing, opposition parties and groups against Mubarak, including Liberals, Arab Nationalists, Leftists and some Islamist opposition politicians. They collectively rejected the prospect of Mubarak's fifth six-year term in office and his alleged manoeuvres to pave the way for a presidential career for his youngest son Gamal Mubarak (Browers 2007; Shorbagy 2007).

Egyptian youth activism had evolved on parallel lines with wider protest movements since the turn of the millennium (Shehata 2008, 2011; El-Mahdi 2014). Among the pioneering youth movements, in which Muhammad and Said both participated, was one called Youth for Change (*shabāb min ajl al-taghyīr*) that was established in early 2005. Its members, involving both partisan and independent youth, acted as a semi-official 'youth wing' of the wider Kifaya movement, and spearheaded new forms of nonviolent protest. Effectively, they decentralized protest activities from central Cairo to impoverished residential areas, and included elements such as flash-mobs and street theatre, with the direct aim of connecting local grievances (such as poor services and lack of housing) to the wider goals for democratic reform. Despite the patriarchal

norms in Egyptian public space, the movement also included a considerable number of young women, although they generally came from wealthier family backgrounds in comparison with their male peers. The loosely affiliated bloggers, among them Muhammad, gained new roles and visibilities online; their personal dissent, reaching ever growing audiences at home and abroad, was new in Egypt's political life, and so were their innovative ways of combining street stunts with up-to-date imageries, videos and stories on the Internet (Fahmi 2009; Onodera 2009, 2011). Although friendship between political rivals, such as Leftists and Islamists, was rare in the late 2000s, the younger-generation bloggers of the Muslim Brotherhood gradually got to know bloggers from other political groups and orientations through their shared online practices and oppositional stances with regards the NDP and Mubarak's rule, as well as through participating in civil society workshops on digital activism in Egypt (e.g., Lynch 2007).

Everyday Sociality

As important as it is to recognize the vital role played by democratic struggle in the lives of the young activists, it is also essential to bear in mind that periodic street protesting, online campaigns, awareness raising stunts, public seminars and other engagements with political dissent occupied only one aspect of everyday existence. During in-between moments, which actually amounted to most of the time, many would meet friends in places of their preference, giving rise to the daily question: Where to sit down, and with whom? The young activists, who lived in various parts of the capital city, and whose everyday trajectories involved criss-crossing the metropolis, normally congregated in different parts of the centre where several political parties, NGOs and trade unions have their headquarters, and where the main sites for public protest and social congregation are located. In this context, the repeated acts of 'sitting together' (*na''ud ma' ba'd*) were important moments for re-creating and managing friendship relations that involved negotiating social proximities between one's self and others, and also offered prime opportunities to hear the latest news, recap past events, devise future engagements and joke around while there was little else to do. Sharing and co-enduring the idle moments of boredom can be in itself very meaningful (e.g., Schielke 2008).

In other words, being a young activist in the late Mubarak era was not only about the 'high' moments of democratic struggle; it was also about leisure, and involved hanging out with friends in places and moments in which protest narratives were circulated, shared experiences told and retold and political

subjectivities mutually constructed. During the heyday of the anti-Mubarak mobilization in the mid-2000s, the downtown quarter of Al-Bursa in particular became a central hub for the everyday trajectories of young opposition activists (El Kadi and ElKerdany 2006, 364–366; Onodera 2015, 150–154). The quarter consisted of a pedestrian area – itself a rarity in overcrowded Cairo – that housed a string of relatively inexpensive street-level coffee shops, or *ahāwī* (sing. *ahwa*), that were filled with a constant buzz of life and the 'to-and-fro' of clientele, friends, colleagues and associates from various backgrounds: from young professionals and students to foreign expatriates, local artists, musicians and other breeds of 'cultured people'. Journalists from private newspapers would come after office hours with the latest gossip and news, before it made the headlines the following day. Young men and women could socialize with relative ease, unlike in the more localized and male-dominated ahāwī in popular, working class (*sha'bi*) quarters of Cairo where cross-gender socializing and, for instance, the sight of young women smoking cigarettes and socializing with unrelated young men could potentially create a minor stir. Moreover, the old colonial-era buildings, the streets named after national heroes and the statues erected in their memory, cater to a sense of a glorious history: one of liberation and national pride. It could be seen as 'hybrid' urban space (Nederveen Pieterse 2009) in that it conjoined nostalgia for a glorious past, for freedom and the country's intellectual life and a sense of cosmopolitanism, with popular sensibilities and sociability – and relatively low prices.

For the young from outside Cairo, visiting places like Al-Bursa was a must-have experience in order to gain a sense of the capital city's 'activist scene' and the buzz of its political life. Members of different political groups, such as Liberals, Communists and Nasserists, passed numerous evenings there with fellow activists, including both 'friends' and 'foes'. Contentious conversations would occasionally flare up within and between different gatherings, and seating arrangements were modified accordingly. Young activists would leave their tables to join political events such as protests and seminars, only to return afterwards to recount their views and fresh experiences, and to plan future actions.

Due to the fact that the activist meetings and socializing often took place late in the evening, the activists' opportunities to attend were highly gendered. Whereas young men were relatively free from family oversight, young women often had home 'curfews' and, due to patriarchal norms, were expected to stay within the safe contours of studies, work or domestic life, especially in the evenings. On the other hand, the period of prolonged adolescence – or, for some, that of 'waithood' (Singerman 2007; Honwana 2012) – allowed relative leeway and increased opportunities to take part in intense social networking whenever

it was possible. The Internet, and especially Facebook and other social net-working sites, also alleviated these differential opportunities based on gender since young women could better participate in online discussions from home.

Indeed, in the late 2000s, the changing patterns of online communication and networking have also brought tangible changes to how young Egyptians negotiate not only their dissent activities, but also their friendship relations. While the issue of online friendships goes beyond the scope of this chapter, it is mentioned here to remind us that the shared experiences of the 'wired' activists were no longer only based on daily encounters but, increasingly, on those mediated to growing publics through the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Herrera 2014). However, the need for face-to-face interaction among young activists had not disappeared. On the one hand, it was common knowledge that the Internet was a precarious means of communication due to digital surveillance and hacking, and phone conversations could be tapped by the security services. On the other, relations of trust, solidarity and group belonging required sustained face-to-face interactions so as to be verified and re-created, a phenomenon that particularly concerns the political sphere in which alliances and informal networks could be volatile and fast-changing. Although the members of Youth for Change managed to gain new political roles and visibilities during the electoral period in 2005, the renewed police pressure in the following year, coupled with internal conflicts between partisan and independent youth, resulted in the group's gradual disintegration. The members waged their last collective protest activities in April and May 2006 in support of two prominent judges, who claimed that the 2005 elections had been rigged. Moreover, the group's internal elections for the positions of general coordinator and incumbents of the various committees had turned into heated spectacles.

Shifting Alliances

Returning to the spatial aspects of the young activists' social interactions, urban places like Al-Bursa provided important sites for re-creating friendship relations in the late Mubarak era, but the rather romanticized notion outlined above of one of the social hubs of Cairene activists' daily trajectories was only part of the picture. During my time in Egypt, I encountered rather contradictory attitudes towards Al-Bursa. Some appeared to have poignant feelings about no longer voluntarily going to the area, while not choosing to explain why; others, however, were much more explicit. "Al-Bursa is like sewage," said Mahdi, citing a characterization common among his friends with which he

agreed, adding: "It is a place for things, of course, to be decided, for some plans to be made, but not always for the best of the country." In his grim view, it was the prime arena where careerist youth waged plots against others, where the 'rumour mill' went into higher gear, and where it was impossible to remain neutral in terms of one's allegiance and loyalty:

> If you go there you get involved – if not directly, it will be an indirect process, and if not fast, it will take a longer time. But, still at the end, what will happen to you is that you will get an infection. It is a very bad infection; it's a terrible disease.

In other words, his view was that spending time in these spaces would sooner or later result in an entanglement in contradictory webs of social relations which were seldom easy to navigate without taking up positions against one person or another. Because friendship relations were important sites of trust, belonging and solidarity in contentious politics, and involved daily flows of social, economic and emotional investments, the moments and processes leading to the fracture of friendship – or what had been perceived as such by at least one of the participants – had long-term repercussions in individuals' lives. Ismail remembers the painful experiences of prolonged detention during the Judges affair in 2006, when people he considered friends chose to disown him on ideological and personal grounds. Some even went as far as declaring him a disbeliever (*humma kaffarūnī!*). He was subjected to psychological and physical torture during detention which, coupled with the sense of betrayal, left him temporarily traumatized after release, and unable to return to 'normal' life.

In summer 2008, Walid, an aspiring journalist, considered himself a member of a nascent youth movement called April 6 Youth (*shabāb 6 april*), one of the most long-lasting oppositional youth movements in the run-up to 2011. The movement conjoined former Youth for Change members and previously apolitical youth, and promoted similar street tactics to Youth for Change, but their dissent was channelled through its Facebook group to a greater extent – calling for a general strike on April 6, 2008, for example, in solidarity with the workers' movement in the Nile Delta city of al-Mahalla al-Kubra. Walid was frustrated with the youth movement whose members, in his opinion, still talked too much, performed few concrete actions and, for the most part, met with others in downtown cafes. Airing his practical knowledge about friendship in the contested field of youth activism more generally, he explained that he saw a clear distinction between two forms of friendships that prevailed among young activists: acquaintanceship (*'ilāqa*, lit. a 'relation') and friendship (*ṣadāqa*).

He explained that young activists usually have a large number of acquaintances with whom they meet regularly and engage in oppositional activities. They may appear to be close friends but their alliances are mostly forged in order to defend specific political positions or opinions and, especially, to pursue their personal interests (*maṣāliḥ shakhṣiyya*). Thus, acquaintances stand in contrast to what Walid sees as true friendship, which is characterized by mutual loyalty, affection or love and genuine interest in the other's wellbeing. In comparison, Walid's view of acquaintanceship is that it is more instrumental and often constituted in opposition to others. Such relations, he contended, usually last as long as the grounds for these tactical alliances are in place, but, in the politicked and fast-paced sphere of youth activism, acquaintances often prove interstitial, giving way to new alliances. Similarly to Youth for Change, the April 6 Youth movement was already factionalizing by the summer of 2009, due to arguments over its internal governance and its responses to the sympathetic reception it enjoyed abroad, especially in the United States. By 2010, when Mohamed ElBaradei, the former IAEA chief, was gathering wide support behind his potential candidacy in the presidential elections planned for 2011, the youth movement had fragmented and given way to a number of off-shoot groups that began to organize on their own. At the same time, however, a number of young people, either former members or affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, participated in the pro-ElBaradei campaign, forging new friendships and alliances with more secular-oriented youth activists in the run-up period to the 2011 uprisings.

Lived realities seldom enable a clear-cut analytical separation between the instrumental and affective modes of friendship, although such divisions may inform local meanings of friendship among the activists themselves. At stake is the acknowledgement of what Tilo Grätz (2011) reviews in studies of friendship in Africa more generally: that affective and instrumental (or functional) modes of friendship should not be seen as mutually exclusive but, rather, as contingent upon time, place and social situation. Another possible assumption about friendship is related to the agency involved in maintaining friendship relations over time: there is, in particular, a risk of reproducing powerful assumptions about freedom, choice and individualism that are often valorized in studies based on Western middle-class experience (Grätz 2011; Allan 1989; Bell and Coleman 1999a; Desai and Killick 2013a). When studying friendship relations, as Allan cautions, the aspect of choice should be at least balanced with that of constraint, as both are embedded in and shaped by wider social, political and economic processes (Allan 1989, 30–48). I have suggested that although oppositional youth activism was expanding prior to 2011 it encompassed relatively

small social circles where activists knew one another, and frequented the same cafes, political events and street demonstrations.

Interestingly, soon after Youth for Change had dissolved, Egyptian researcher Amr Abdelrahman (2007, 189) observed that the main pattern for the emergence of 'Kifaya youth' was in the form of sporadic and scattered friendship groups, or *shilal* (sing. *shilla*). He suggests viewing shilla socialities in parallel with more corporatist relations and party affiliations:

> This intimate period of *shilla* formations (*al-ḥāla al-shilaliyya al-ḥamīma*) was remembered by the majority with a deep sense of nostalgia for the past that, in comparison, seems far distant from the present state of recession (*ḥālat al-rukūd al-ḥāliyya*) which is dominated by partisan activities.
>
> ABDELRAHMAN 2007, 189

In Egypt, a shilla is best translated as a 'group of friends' or 'friendship clique' that is forged through schooling, army and the like, and potentially ties its members together for life. As such, it refers to closely-knit groups of friends – a longstanding and widespread form of group formation among young Egyptians. Several scholars have argued for the centrality of these informal networks in Egypt's public political life (Springborg 1975; Migdal 2001; Sakr 2002, 842). Robert Springborg (1975, 1978), who has written relatively extensively on shilla formations in Egyptian politics in the post-independence era, describes them in the context of Egyptian trade unions as "small groups of friends united by bonds of personal, economic, and/or political interest ... It is *shilla*s, rather than large formal organizations ... that perform crucial functions in the Egyptian political system" (Springborg 1978, 275–276).

On the face of it, shilal appear to be informal networks which mediate personal and collective experiences of reciprocity, solidarity and obligation and which can be operationalized as "the framework for effective political, social, and economic action" (Eickelman 2002, 319). Belonging to a shilla potentially secures its members, through informal channels, resource-filled, yet exclusive, everyday connectedness – or *wāsṭa* – to associational life and formal political institutions. The latter represents a prevalent form of 'social capital' that is needed in order to gain access to services, benefits and social exchange systems. The recreational shilal, common among university students, highlight socially sanctioned forms of mixed-gender gathering which channel friendship as well as courtship practices. For young university students in the 1980s, Sherifa Zuhur observed that shilal also provided "social connections, fallbacks, introductions to mates, and favour exchanges. Young women and men feel

an essential need to 'belong' inside or outside the family circle" (Zuhur 1992, 105–106). However, as soon as they enter the public political life and get entangled in vertical relations of power and patronage, shilla formations provoke increasingly negative connotations – on the part of outsiders especially – of shared interest groups or even political cliques (Springborg 1975).

However, as much as the aspect of instrumentality in friendship relations is often emphasized in the existing literature on shilla formations in Egyptian society, it is important to acknowledge that in the lives of young Cairenes they can be as much about joy and everyday conviviality as politics (de Koning 2009). In other words, sometimes members of a given shilla meet for recreation and leisure and, at other times, for more predetermined collective action in pursuit of their particularistic goals. The more recreational shilal may revolve around leisure activities, such as football (or sport fan culture), as well as certain tastes and forms of consumerism. The more affluent and cosmopolitan youth, for example, can find resonance in globally circulating tastes and commodities such as progressive rock, pizza or online movies, adopting lifestyle choices distinguishing them from those who do not have access to such luxuries.

At the same time, due to their public anti-regime stances, the activists were in many ways 'deviant' characters in society, which in itself confined them to rather narrow social urban spaces in central Cairo. Because oppositional activism was regarded in such a detrimental light by society, some concealed their political activism on the university campus, or within their families and the home neighbourhood. This choice involved selective self-exposure in everyday life, which stemmed partly from the goal of circumventing police surveillance but was also, for some, about avoiding potential social ostracism by their non-politicized peers. Huda – a young university student – told me that once she began to engage in political activism, her friends at the university abandoned her socially, to the point where her potential boyfriend called her a 'crazy girl' (*magnūna*) and other fellow students with whom she normally 'hung out' on the campus began to avoid her. She was briefly detained in April 2008, and soon afterwards joined the April 6 Youth movement; in 2008, Huda considered herself lucky because her parents allowed her to participate in it. Many of her friends concealed their political involvement at home and could not take part in the group's meetings late in the evenings due to parental curfews.

In the context of activism, shilla-based internal politics sometimes leads to dire experiences and disillusionment with regards those once considered as friends. Mahdi had received his share of 'back-stabbing' in the ranks of Youth for Change, and his characterization of Al-Bursa was the most extreme I encountered, yet it resonates with other views of the 'symptomatic' qualities of Egyptian politics in general. One would bemoan that "Political life in Egypt

is ill," (*al-ḥayā al-siyāsiyya fī maṣr marīḍa*) and another, "There is no love in politics" (*mafīsh ḥubb fī al-siyāsa*). While the more pessimistic accounts encompassed the undertakings of the ruling elite, these charges also targeted the political opposition, and the field of youth activism was not immune to partisan interests, personal differences and ideological strife. A popular Egyptian proverb – "Your friend swallows stones for you[r sake], and your enemy wishes for your mistakes" (*Ḥabībak yibla' lak al-zalaṭ, wa 'aduwwak yitmannā lak al-ghalaṭ*) – is indicative of the degree of intensity placed on friendship solidarities, which were of heightened importance when engaging in public political dissent. The competition between opposition groups over resources, membership base and public prominence also involved constant definitions of friendships in relation to those who were considered rivals. Thus, coalition-building among young activists was hindered by rivalries, for instance, between certain Liberal-oriented and Arab Nationalist-oriented youth, yet in the context of everyday interactions, friendship relations were constantly negotiated through the intricate details of everyday practices, and it was often the seemingly mundane things that mattered the most, as Laleh Khalili (2013) also observes of political activists in Lebanon. In Cairo's cafes, as in Beirut's bars, actions such as paying for the rounds of drinks, offering to buy *fūl* (fava bean) sandwiches 'to go' or lending a mobile phone contributed to the daily exchanges that helped to maintain friendship relations. During detention, as we have seen, sharing food with fellow inmates could also contribute to the re-creation of mutual solidarity and reciprocity. Over the Internet, befriending or defriending someone on Facebook, liking and commenting on another's postings or sharing Twitter messages contributed to similar processes of exchange in the virtual spaces. These realms should not be regarded as mutually exclusive but part and parcel of the young activists' everyday existence. In general, if the social and economic exchanges were not reciprocated when the occasion arose to do so, it would be seen in a detrimental light and possibly generate rifts between friends.

Conclusions

Since 2011, Egypt's state-society relations have gone through profound political, social and economic transformations. Soon after Mubarak's ousting, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took on the role of overseeing the transitional period, which witnessed a number of street clashes between young revolutionaries and state authorities. The Muslim Brotherhood and conservative Salafists won the first parliamentary elections in early 2012, and the Brotherhood's Muhammad Mursi was elected president in June 2012.

The electoral legitimacy of the Islamists was, however, outweighed by popular resentment against the Brotherhood's consolidation of political power, culminating in mass protests on June 30, 2013 which, coupled with the strategic part played by the Military, toppled Mursi from power in July 2013. Much of the Mubarak-era political opposition, including the young activists who featured in this chapter, aligned with this momentum. Since then, the consequent suppression of pro-Mursi protests and Egypt's internal 'war on terror' at the dawn of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's term have, however, become highly divisive issues among them: some were supportive of military rule; a few supported the Islamists' claim to political legitimacy; while many were left with even narrower political spaces than those experienced during the late Mubarak era. Amid a heightened sense of nationalism in public life, which also regards street protests as being at the expense of stability, the security apparatus has encroached even further onto their daily interactions both online and offline. In a coinciding development, downtown Cairo no longer offers a similar sense of 'activist life' in its milieus, and even the popular coffee houses of al-Bursa were forced to give way to a parking lot in 2015.

In this chapter, I focused on the pre-2011 period, and suggested that friendship serves as a fruitful venue for examining the lived experiences of youthful democratic struggle. Engaging in pro-democracy movements and youth coalitions in the late 2000s provided much more varied experiences for young Cairenes than merely those resulting from the acts of public dissent which represented rather periodic events in their everyday lives. Importantly, being a young activist involved participating in a dissident lifestyle that incorporated sharing moments of being and doing things with others on a daily basis. In the absence of representative political institutions, the experiences of having friends and being a friend to others offered intimate avenues to public political life that stretched beyond kin ties and formal organizations. Although the field of youth activism was divided along lines of class, gender and political affiliation, the young could also forge mutual grounds for friendship relations on the basis of this lifestyle choice, as well as shared tastes and everyday social conduct. The shared experiences, especially those of youthful resistance and injustice, such as those giving rise to prison cell stories, could connect young activists despite the group divisions and ideological strife that was prevalent in the secular-oriented political opposition.

Furthermore, despite the decisive role of the ICTs and social media in mediating friendship relations in the late 2000s, the daily need for face-to-face social interactions remained important due to the politicized and policed circumstances in which the young activists lived. Safeguarding the bonds of trust, belonging and everyday solidarity were highly meaningful en-

gagements. Meanwhile, in the evolving context of youth activism, the shilla formations became the recipients of increasingly ambivalent and negative connotations as vehicles for pursuing personal interests and shared goals while being subject to shifting alliances. Oscillating between the informal and formal areas of public political life, shilal and friendship groups more generally mediated both affective and instrumental connections. Thus, in the run-up to 2011, the young activists' engagements did not only relate to sharing dissenting views and the activities against the ruling political elite which resulted. An important aspect of their political engagements was also to learn how to negotiate everyday relations in the context of rapidly shifting alliances, and to manage the public self so as to place it in the least vulnerable position possible.

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Respectful Resistance: Young Musicians and the Unfinished Revolution in Tunisia

Sofia Laine, Leena Suurpää and Afifa Ltifi

> I am an unknown creature yelling high behind my microphone singing all alone, provoking silence in quiet places 'Heartless places'
> WAEL MESKINI 2011[1]

⸪

The Tunisian Revolution in January 2011 initiated a wave of Arab-Mediterranean uprisings, all articulating their demands with democracy, social justice and dignity (Glasius and Pleyers 2013). In the post-revolutionary Arab world, multiple art forms have been used to fight for the recognition of the diversity of political expressions by young people, as Wael Meskini's lyrics above indicate. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the meanings of music in relation to young people's civic engagement in Tunisia by listening to the life stories of young Tunisian musicians.

In earlier studies it has been claimed that the overall discontent and lack of trust in public institutions on the part of the young in post-revolutionary Tunisia have been made visible through cultural channels, especially through diverse genres of music (Mannone 2012; Skalli 2012). We continue this discussion by exploring multiple meanings ascribed to the notion of resistance among young musicians in Tunisia. The conceptual pair of youth and resistance is often treated in connection with state-centred arenas, manifest political participation as well as overt dissent on the streets. This leads easily to somewhat spectacular accounts of young people's resistance, leaving aside its diverse everyday modes, agencies and spaces (see Bayat 2013). By examining the informants' reflections on the roles of music in their lives, and by listening to their music and lyrics, we aim to analyse the complexities of youthful civic action through music in Tunisia with the concept 'respectful resistance'.

Resistance is often seen as a reaction to individual or collective oppression, whether overt or invisible. In its traditional usage, resistance is embedded in the

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1 Translated from Arabic to English by Afifa Ltifi.

exercise of oppression by a ruling group (see Young 2000). This understanding of resistance also seems reasonable in the Tunisian post-revolutionary context. In this article we highlight the contested understandings and manifestations of resistance among young Tunisian musicians. We discuss how the notion is jointly embedded in respect for the country's cultural heritage and its musical tradition, and the struggle for material, cultural and social change.

The concept of 'respectful resistance', attached here to post-revolutionary conditions in Tunisia, has been used in various fields and contexts and refers to the multiple tensions embedded in the acts of negotiating with and challenging different authorities (parents, teachers, politicians) while acting as musician (see also Quiñones 2015). These young musicians, after growing up during President Ben Ali's authoritarian regime, are obliged to express their discontent in creative ways in spaces in which artistic expression may be limited, challenged or even dangerous. After our field work in Tunisia, the state of emergency law that was put in place in November 2015 after several terrorist attacks was extended several times. The law allows, for example, the banning of strikes and meetings, the temporary closure of theatres and bars and measures to control media. Street art and the use of public space for different types and forms of non-violent argumentation, providing a diversity of counter publics in the public sphere (Palma 2014), have an especially important function in embodying and representing freedom of expression and maintaining recently gained citizenship rights.

In the next section we provide a brief background to the role of music in Tunisia, to our research process and to our informants. Then we discuss the concept of respectful resistance in our informants' artistic exercise at two intersecting levels: first, on the continuum of respect for tradition and the quest for change; second, in terms of generational dialogue and conflict. We conclude the chapter by underlining the importance of in-depth analysis of artistic modes of 'respectful resistance' by young people, especially in societal situations in which citizenship rights and freedoms are actively contested. This article is also written with respect at a delicate moment in Tunisia's history, in order to understand better how these young 'engaged artists' strive on a daily basis for deeper democracy and a more open society through their lyrics and performed songs.

Music in Tunisia: Academic Discussion and Fieldwork

During and since 2011, hip hop scenes with their revolutionary dimension have gained much attention both in the academy and media. It marked a unique moment where rap lyrics were considered relevant and were heard attentively

by different age groups. Academic scholars have contributed to a similar kind of embrace of the new roles and visibilities of rap artists in cultural production. Nouri Gana (2012, 26) observes that "rap music has contributed to the dissemination of a culture of dissent, wakeful to societal and economic problems and mindful of popular preoccupations and concerns", thus describing hip hop culture as "an unlikely democratizing force, implying its largely amateurish nature and its committed political agenda". According to Brigit Englert (2008, 8), the perception of music as an empowering counter-hegemonic force has shaped the perspective of many scholars, to the extent that its 'resistant' character is sometimes taken as a defining characteristic.

The existing research literature gives no uniform account of the significance of music in Tunisia in different historical periods. On the one hand, the musical history of the country has been characterized as particularly mixed, blending different cultural and linguistic inspirations – Berber, Turkish, Andalusian, African, European, particularly French and increasingly North American, albeit often via France, to mention a few. This has been claimed to provide an enriching platform for a lively tradition of popular music, discussed with terms such as polyglossia, inter-musicality and hybridity. (Mannone 2012; Hakima 2011; Korpe 2013.) It seems that the very meaning of Tunisian popular music in conceptual terms is rather ambivalent, regardless of whether we look at its 'mainstream', 'folk', 'alternative' or 'underground' dimensions.[2] However, scholars rather unanimously state that the political dimension of the music in Tunisia has multiple sources, roots and pieces of tradition that pre-date the revolutionary processes of recent years. Since Tunisia became independent in 1956 each regime has favoured a particular music genre: Tunisia's first president, Habib Bourguiba (1957–1987), elevated Andalusian and Turkish-inspired *malouf* to the status of 'national' music, and Ben Ali (1987–2011) associated the *mezwed* with working-class origins (Kraft 2012).

In addition to favouring particular music genres, cultural censorship and a fear of artists on the part of the political elite were a central part of the history of popular music in Tunisia more or less throughout the regimes of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Benoît Challand (2013, 5–6) calls the period from 1930 to 2010 the "age of ideologies" in the Middle East, characterized by forced homogenization of national identities. The solidification of state control and of a unified version of identity building also had its impact on the music culture in Tunisia. As Mannone (2012, 61) describes: "The various fields of Tunisian cultural

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2   Popular music literally translates in the Tunisian context to Chaabi music which is associated with folkloric Mezwed music. Hip Hop can be also considered as Chaabi as it is accessible to people with different backgrounds, and it is claimed to speak to the marginalized.

production were therefore structured to favour those artists whose works were politically neutral or focused on social issues that would have favoured the regime's policies." The homogenizing effects of the regimes of Bourguiba and Ben Ali are claimed to have contributed to the lack of knowledge of the plurality of the music traditions in Tunisia. Now, in the post-revolutionary period, this diversity of cultural roots has been celebrated, mixed and fused.

If academic scholars provide competing arguments on how music matters in terms of public debate and societal change, so do the musician informants in this study. Eight amateur musicians were interviewed for this article, three of them collectively as they came from the same music group. The interviews were conducted by Afifa Ltifi, a young Tunisian scholar and civic activist residing in Tunis, who directly contacted some of the informants herself (some of whom she knew beforehand); these informants then recommended other musicians. Ltifi also translated the lyrics of those songs that have been used in this article, being originally in Arabic language.

The music scenes of Tunisian youth do not necessarily stem from the most marginalized parts of society – socioeconomically, culturally or racially. Owning a musical instrument is most common among young people whose families are financially comfortable and/or socially aware of the importance of a hobby, be it music or sports, for their children. The interviewed musicians (aged 20–31.) also mostly come from middle-class and relatively well-educated backgrounds. While only one of the informants is a woman, themes related to the gender divide in Tunisian music scenes were discussed in every interview. It should also be mentioned that only one informant belonged to a black minority group, yet issues related to race, music empowerment and liberation reverberated in the accounts of some artists. At the time of the interviews, spring and summer 2013, many of the informants were university students. Four of them come from the north and three others from the south, yet all lived in Tunis at the time of the interviews, which coincided with the first parliamentary elections since the revolution had taken place two and half years earlier. The biggest and ruling party was Ennahda, a moderate Islamist political party whose victory was a disappointment for many secularist youth. Thus, research was conducted at a period when Ennahda was in power.

The team work among the three authors of this article, from sketching the research design to the reporting phase, demanded a readiness to share both personal and scientific reflections related to the research topic with the co-researchers (Laine et al. 2015; Jabberi and Laine 2015). Furthermore, our collective work entailed critical conversations not only related to the research topic, field work and empirical material per se, but also to the overall Tunisian

context in which the research issue was embedded. When researchers have
different knowledge, positioning and emotional attachment with regards the
topic, team work challenges them to 'go beyond what I know'. After careful
reading of the transcribed data, a week consisting of collective discussion and
analysis was set up in Helsinki in June 2014. During the week, the concept of
'respectful resistance' crystallized as a tentative conclusion to our discussion,
and a conceptual framework for this article.

"Revolution is a life style"

Live Art
Live art and don't feel weary
Just jump brother, don't step back
Live art and don't shut your mouth
Live at wherever you want
Live art in every city
you have it all in your hands
Draw on our neighbourhoods' walls with your colours
You artist, you are everything
Live art with all its colours
With all its lyrics and rhythms
The citizen is the artist of his age
Live your art without borders
Live your art in alleys, deserts and neighbourhoods
NOUVEAU SYSTEME 2011[3]

How do the interviewed musicians articulate the issues related to change and
respect for tradition? The excerpt of the song and the statement, "Revolu-
tion is a life style", manifests the ethos that is largely shared among the inter-
viewed musicians, one which resists any simple oppositional stance toward
the hegemonic culture, political elite or the parents' generation. During the
Ennahda regime (2012–2014) urban, secular, educated young people felt dis-
illusioned and sidelined from the political process, and the aim to continue
the revolution is also visible in the lyrics and narratives of the interviewed
young musicians. They call for breaking the culture of silence and the imposed
authoritarian discourse of Tunisian cultural and political life. The lyrics of
the song cited above celebrate the heterogeneity and freedom of artists and

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3   Translated from Tunisian Arabic to English by Afifa Ltifi.

encourage everyone to practice art – whatever the art they espouse. It is a call to expand the cultural sphere in Tunisia and to struggle to widen the space for the civic engagement of Tunisian citizens.

The interplay between music, civic action and social change is far from simple. As one of our informant puts it:

> It is true that almost everyone wants to talk about the revolution. It is becoming a trendy commercial thing, but we are not working from that standpoint. We are singing for the revolution and not about the revolution. We are singing for the continuity of the revolution. Our goal is not to sing, our goal is to historicize what is happening now with art. You will see how history will be written 10 years from now. History won't be written the same way we lived it on the 14th of January, it will be written according to the understanding of the fittest 10 years from now. My goal as a Tunisian is to make a song so history will not be falsified one day; this is the least one can do. Another goal is to keep reminding people that there is hope … A revolution is not a day or two, a year or two; a revolution is a life style, a revolutionary life. If you want to make progress in life you have to lead a revolutionary life … We are apolitical, and any politician or anyone who goes astray one day we will attack him in our songs and anyone who does something good we will recognize his success as well.

The account of this 22-year-old male informant reveals how the young musicians see themselves as civic actors in the middle of an unaccomplished reformatory process, thus contesting other commentators on the contemporary condition of Tunisia. For this informant, the task of musicians is to historicize a significant and ongoing period in Tunisia. A similar line of argument can be found in the interviewed female musician's story: "I didn't write about the Tunisian revolution, and I can't write about it because I feel that I'm still under its spell; we are still in a revolution. I feel I can't be creative in something that hasn't finished yet."

The interviews highlight the reformatory rather than rebellious understanding of resistance. The description by the famous Tunisian rapper, El Genèral – "The goal is not revolt but reform" – is equally shared among the interviewed musicians. Music's potential as a tool for social change is understood as the capacity to speak for multiple audiences and to enlarge public spaces in which people from different backgrounds may articulate their visions of society and its future. Rather than being a soundtrack for the revolution (Westin 2013), which has become a common label for the musical

scenes throughout North Africa, the interviewed musicians tell a story about a soundtrack for the democratic citizenship of Tunisians that aims to talk to the people, to evoke the people, to unify the people. The lyrics in the *Live Art* song from Nouveau Systeme quoted above tell the story of the sombre societal situation in 2011: "Today life is like a jungle, everyone aspires to power, dreams of killing, and burning lives." The lyrics position musicians as a counterforce to this development, struggling for the good life, as the song of one of our informants makes manifest: "We are not asking for money or fame, we want our life today to get brighter."

It is easy to find resonance with what Paolo Freire describes (1970, 21–22), as "conscientization" (i.e. the deepening process of awaking consciousness) in his framework of cultural action for freedom: "Little by little, as these possibilities multiply, the learners, through mastery of new generative words, expand both their vocabulary and their capacity for expression by the development of their creative imagination." In this framework, the freedom of expression is tightly connected to the freedom of civic thought, and to building critical understanding and knowledge of what is going on in Tunisia. In this light the quotation from our male informant above, and his expression of his life politics, gets a particular meaning. It is the story of a civic actor. At the same time, it stands in contrast to the stereotype of the (African) artist characterized as a primarily political actor whose ability is valued to the extent to which he/she is able to involve him/herself in overt (dis)approval of politics. The idea of conscientization is encoded in the narratives and lyrics, which contribute to capturing the identities and histories of the Tunisian people. This kind of process, wherein the particular societal moment is 'composed' musically, has been the topic of many studies examining the political and emotional power of music (Street 2012, 98–117).

A relevant question is the degree to which this kind of conscientization, and the resistance embedded in it, can be considered voluntarily chosen, and how much it is a result of the limited opportunities for young musicians to attain a legitimized position in the political and cultural spheres, thereby leading to the search for compromises and 'revolutionary diplomacies'. In the interviews, young cultural actors in Tunisia are also positioned as an oppressed group in the face of the cultural imperialism of Tunisian society (Young 1990, 60), regardless of their important roles in the course of the revolution.

The song *Live Art*, cited above, and the informants' stories, encourage us to argue that the creative production of music needs to be reconceived as a civic process rather than a heroic act (see also Toynbee 2012, 168). Both the lyrics and the interviewees' accounts contest any simplistically assumed revolutionary character to the music of the young generation. Rather, they

come close to those scholarly arguments which approach politics as an intrinsic, although often hidden, unit in any artistic production, as argued, for example, by Howard Becker (1974) in his classical discussion of art as collective action. One example of this is the use of language in the music. A number of the interviewees strive towards mixing different languages in order to reform the heritage of Tunisian music, to reach a transnational audience, but also to use the Tunisian dialect as a powerful means to reach the Tunisian people with stories about the societal problems of the country. For instance, the female interviewee included standard Arabic in the language used in her lyrics, something relatively rare in contemporary Tunisia. Young people of her age readily consider standard Arabic in music or poetry archaic and dull, sometimes even funny.

The interviews also highlight the importance of what can be called everyday art politics: a willingness on the part of the young musicians to raise daily topics of ordinary Tunisian life that are rarely discussed in public life or that have been consciously muted. The lyrics of the informants' music groups concern a set of silenced stories from Ben Ali's regime before the revolution: poverty, unemployment, institutionalized violence and corruption, cultural censorship, the precarious future vision of the youth and their political mistrust. By referring to experiences of the interviewed Tunisian activist groups, the researcher Tilia Korpe (2013) states in her study, *Artivism in Tunis*, that it has become easier for young people to express views on issues related to human rights and freedom of expression.

However, music's power to evoke hidden histories seems to have its restrictions (see also Street 2012). It is still hard to expose socio-economic problems, as it has been in the past, despite the high rate of unemployment and other economic problems in contemporary youth-dense Tunisia. The crucial struggle that seems to unify the interviewed musicians is how to bring together the politics of dignity – referring to civic entitlement and human rights – and the politics of justice – referring to poverty reduction, fair employment and governmental schemes, and how music could contribute to this struggle. Following Nancy Fraser's classical framework (2008), the issue is whether cultural recognition can be extended so as to enhance redistribution in material terms (see also Appadurai 2008).

While highlighting the everyday miseries of Tunisian people, the lyrics can also be interpreted as narratives of hope, love and respect for the country's rich heritage. A similar double message has been found by Nouri Gana (2012, 42) in his analysis of Tunisian rap. Sombre stories of securitization, corruption and injustice go hand in hand with the search for the politics of fun, implying diverse carnivalesque tones in the cultural sphere.

Dynamics within and between Generations

She is a W.O.M.A.N
She is an emotional woman
She is a woman who isn't ashamed when she leaves her lover's house
She is a woman who loves butterflies
She is a woman who dreams of a rebellious poet
She is a woman lost in an ignorant world
           BIANCA LA GITANA 2008[4]

The lyrics cited above are written by one of the few female slammers in Tunisia, adopting the subgenre of improvised and rhythmic storytelling, a sort of musical poetry. Her lyrics are polyphonic stories about emotions, embodiment, dreams, loss and misunderstanding – themes that young women in Tunisia tackle daily. For the female informant, her main concern has to do with young women's artistic aspirations and opportunities and the injustice that they experience in masculine fields of music. Both her interview and the male informants' narratives tell of multiple forms of marginalization that young females face while making music in Tunisia today. One of our male informants, however, justifies why it is difficult for him to work with females:

> Unfortunately when you have a female with you, you can't do anything. When we have a concert late at night, her family do not allow her [to perform]; when we want to have rehearsals we need to wait for holidays for her to be available. So females create many obstacles that hinder your progress and women get tired of all that and lose interest with the excess of hardships. It is so rare to find rebellious women who start standing up to their families and manage to make it.

Another male informant from the same music group continues:

> You can mostly find women in Rock and Metal. Yet women are always unavailable for that; our culture and our society still perceive a woman as unable; and she should not be seen hanging out a lot or working with men. In our group work we consult women and there are a lot of female figures who help us and give us advice whenever necessary.

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4   Translated from French to English by Leena Suurpää.

While the interviewed young male musicians sing about equality and justice for all, they hardly see young female musicians as fully legitimate actors in their music scene. Rather, they are depicted as assistants or consumers of music whose everyday lives and leisure activities are in many ways shaped by patriarchal norms, and justification for this is based on societal conditions rather than personal attitudes toward female musicians. Our female informant's interview entails a set of critical commentaries on this issue:

> I write for women and about women. I talk about social schizophrenia and hypocrisy, or the way the society looks at women, as I have a text that talks about women who get divorced and about virginity problems and also about love.

When talking about social schizophrenia and hypocrisy she does not only address her criticism to the government and the patriarchal structure of the country. Her story can be equally read as a counter-narrative to the common discourse of female passivity in public life, among both old and young, including the stereotype of the marginal position of young women in music scenes. In these kinds of accounts, paternalist attitudes towards women's respectability with regard to public performances, family duties and sexuality seem to be intertwined with indifference about women's artistic struggles or even explicit discrimination against female colleagues. According to the musicologist Alyson E. Jones (2010), who has done significant ethnographic work among Tunisian female musicians, the latter have gradually expanded definitions of respectability while remaining respectable. The concept of respectful resistance seems pertinent also in this context: the female artists have gradually reformed the field of music by successfully gaining roles which may be perceived as both respectable and disruptive. Especially in terms of Street Poetry women have not only reclaimed space from the state, but from men as well (Palma 2014, 11).

The narrative of the female informant can be read as a personal struggle to imagine alternative realities with the help of art. She explains that her mother "used to tell me that studying should be a priority and art should remain a hobby". Nonetheless, she remained active in writing, and had already participated in a poetry and short novel contest by the age 10. In addition she was engaged by a radio channel during Ben Ali's regime: "I started reading my poems which were in the form of letters: letters for my dead grandfather, my mother, father, and the daughter that I don't have yet." After these performances, she was introduced to slam: "Afterwards we had the Street Poetry project, and the first session of this project that took place during Ramadan. I was the only girl performing slam that night."

It seems that the forms of injustice that the young musicians face in Tunisia are not only gendered but also have to do with generational disputes. In this context, the interviewees addressed their criticism to the shortage of trustworthy social networks – among the young, between young and old, and between professional and amateur artists. As our female informant describes: "The biggest hardship was when some people wanted to shut my mouth out of jealousy. I hate saying that honestly. There are people who will erase your name from the list of participants." Intra-generational contests among young musicians get critical attention in the interviews. Our female informant regrets that the shortage of economic and cultural resources to make the music public may easily contribute to conflicts rather than solidarity between young artists. This, in turn, further weakens the socio-cultural position of these actors in society.

One dispute has to do with interpretations of the political dimension of the music produced by young people, particularly in the course of the revolution. The interviewees claim that the process of the politicization and commercialization of the music may go hand in hand. One of the male informants, a partisan of civic engagement, somewhat paradoxically regrets the ongoing trend in the Tunisian music scene of the young generation, saying, "Almost everyone wants to talk about the revolution. It is becoming a trendy commercial thing, but we are not working from that standpoint." The same kind of ambivalence is also echoed in other interviews. Rap music, which has gained a salient position in the political engagement of the musicians in Tunisia, is not exempt from such critique. One of the informants formulates his criticism in the following way:

> But rap is not music to be performed by anyone. You should study it and get a deeper insight into it to be able to understand. Many are becoming rappers randomly without thinking. Some have a divine gift and can do it and just need to hone that skill. In Tunisia, those who have potential and skills are not able to hone them and those who have no skills are able to be popular and become famous.

The field of so-called underground music also gives rise to hesitant attitudes:

> I think it is artificial. We have a tendency to copy-paste in Tunisia. We have amateurs who do not initiate their own music; they keep copying and making cover songs ... Also it should not remain underground; an artist should fight for his art and make his music well known for those who love it and for those who don't.

Ultimately, there seems to be a set of disagreements on how to revise the concept of 'committed art' in the current musical scene in Tunisia (see also Gana 2012, 26). Here we come back to the classic debate over the "urge to 'authenticity'", and its counterpoint, "the fear of being 'inauthentic'", as Simon Frith (1988, 22) phrased it in his analysis of the political affiliations of music, starting from jazz in 1950s Britain. The rap culture seems to represent a particular symbolic target in contemporary Tunisia in this respect: claims about an overdose of political rap merge with claims of the neglect of other young musicians and their music genres. The ambiguity does not only concern rap music as such. It is a part of the dispute regarding the meaning of 'politics' in music, ranging from aspirations to enlarge the understanding of what the political responsibility of the artist may entail, to aversion towards politics as whole, independently of whether it refers to the government regime or the commercial politicization of music scenes. This is manifested in an illuminating way in the account of the informant whose group's aim is to blend different musical styles, to rethink current musical trends in Tunisia:

> We can be engaged with certain values that aren't necessarily political. We selected the alternative genre because the political one will limit our potential. Militant music will restrict us to a certain audience while we want to expand our audience and please all tastes regardless of people's differences and belonging, ideologies. Our music is for all Tunisians. We are aiming to be a new fresh breath that will lift people from the current situation and stressful mood that has started to overwhelm the political and social life in the country. We tend to sing for people in open spaces to be closer to them; we hate being restricted in a genre or a place …

Furthermore, the interviews reveal an interesting ambiguity about intergenerational dialogue regarding the production of music. On the one hand, their music is seen as a means to (re)-establish dialogue between young and old, as one male informant describes: "Of course people do not accept new things easily and it is normal to face rejection. But we didn't allow that to happen with us as we tried to please all ages. Our songs can be audible for older and younger generations." The interviews are also stories about young adults, mostly from relatively prosperous backgrounds, whose artistic biography has been affected by the support of their parents. On the other hand, independence from their parents' generation, including in musical terms, is seen as a way to tackle the powerlessness of young people in the face of the older decision-makers of Tunisian society. In the same way, proceeding in an artistic career is seen as a way to gain more freedom to rethink cultural traditions in a respectful but reformative manner.

The loyalty expressed towards their parents' generation can be seen as a subtle form of auto-censorship. The young artists feel pressured to reassure their parents and other older relatives about the mindfulness of the music and lyrics they produce. This sort of auto-censorship resonates with the generational power relations. Tunisian youth constantly grapple with archaic perceptions of inter-generational relations that have survived the revolutionary processes. What is more, art has always been frowned upon in local culture – networks of religions, families and relatives. So, alongside expressions of gratitude for certain aspects of the heritage of earlier generations, there are narratives exposing a set of inter-generational disagreements and ruptures. One source of disagreement concerns the possible future artistic careers of young people. The interviews reveal that parents do not want that of their children to lie in the artistic field even if they like the music their children are performing. This reluctance seems to be very much linked with their fears concerning the socio-economic uncertainty of the artistic career, whether amateur or professional.

Respecting Respectful Resistance

This chapter has examined the roles and meanings of music in the civic engagement of young musicians in contemporary Tunisia. The young musicians enjoyed increased artistic freedom during and right after the Tunisian Revolution in 2011 for a couple of years, and used it to build polyphonic public space with diverse claims, visions and aspirations for civic engagement. The post-revolutionary music scene expanded considerably, especially through social media. However, after several terrorist attacks in 2015 and predicating with the state of emergency law, the authorities have also become more intolerant towards artistic expression, and the future of cultural space in Tunisia is highly unclear.

We have applied the concept of respectful resistance as an analytic framework to discuss how young musicians strive for social change while not insisting on overt confrontation with society and its prevailing social order. The concept emphasizes that recognition of Tunisian cultural heritage and its musical tradition and the struggle for cultural and social change may be articulated as joint aspirations for the young musicians. The understanding of respectful resistance that concurrently encourages reconciliation and struggle does not imply that the musical scenes of the informants should be characterized as conservative, timid or mainstream.

The concept highlights the importance of a broad framework when analysing intergenerational encounters in the creation and development of

musical scenes in Tunisia, both at the level of personal biographies and in more institutional terms. As Henri Onodera (2015) shows in the context of Egypt, increased forms of youth activism in the 2000s have promoted a critical generational consciousness and provided new meanings to the notion of youth as a rebellious political category, and in some ways a privileged experiential realm, ready to conduct collective resistance on its own terms. Ultimately, it seems evident that there is a great need to adopt a contextually sensitive approach to the issue of resistance and what constitutes its transformative potential when studying the role of music in youth engagement in Tunisia, Africa or elsewhere (see also Bayat 2013; Chomiak 2011; Mannone 2012; Englert 2008).

The narratives of the young musicians reveal the scarcity of socio-economic resources to pursue their artistic interests, a challenge that concerns both Tunisia and the larger African context (Englert 2008). What is more, dominant cultural trends in Tunisia seem to arise mostly from the masculine and urban population, leaving feminine, rural and different ethnic communities relatively marginalized in the articulation of new subjectivities, messages and artefacts in the field of musical production, regardless of the strong claims to cultural hybridity and equality of the young musicians. This is true in spite of the fact that young Tunisian women are well educated (although often unemployed) in comparison with other countries in North Africa and the Middle East, and it is often explicitly stated that they enjoy a culture of equality unmeasured elsewhere in the region (Ennaji and Sadiqi 2011).

The 'political' dimension of the music produced by young Tunisians is highly disputed in the interviews. For the interviewed musicians, music seems to symbolize both an escape from the state-dominated arena of formal politics and an intrinsic part of their everyday politicization. The transformative potential of music is connected both to the material and cultural conditions of the artistic activities of the interviewed young musicians at the daily level, and with their *conscientization* efforts in society through the medium of their music. It is also seen as a powerful means to gain visibility and fame, if not a livelihood, thus having links to the commercialization of musical scenes in Tunisia. This is by no means a Tunisian phenomenon, nor a recent issue. The scholars analysing the interplay between music and politics state that the commodification of music – with its cultural 'banalization', music industries and so on – cannot be seen solely as a matter of regret. It should also be analysed as a significant element of social change. (See i.e. Attali 1985; Street 2012.).

The concept of respectful resistance encourages us to look beyond explicitly political songs or forms of performance. The British writer Dave Laing (2003, 345) has made a distinction between "protest music" and "music of resistance", pointing out the importance of the context wherein the music is produced,

performed and consumed. He describes protest music as comprising explicit statements of opposition concerning a specific issue or enemy; music of resistance, on the other hand, is seen as more coded or opaque in its nature, without an explicit narrative of 'us' and 'them'. Its politics may lie in the mere act of singing. (See also Street 2012.) In the context of the interviewed Tunisian musicians, the understanding of music as resistance is pertinent, even if elements of protest music may be found in their lyrics and interviews.

In this context, the notion of respect acquires multiple meanings when connected to the narratives of the interviewed Tunisian musicians, referring to the contested interpretations of, and conditions for, recognition and entitlement in personal, cultural and material terms. It may be seen as a metaphor for the democratic pluralism and revolutionary process for which the interviewees are fighting with their music. The struggles of the interviewed musicians concern their relations with young fellow musicians and parents at the everyday level, as much as the political elite and state control at a more systemic level.

Finally, respectful resistance can be considered a result of both the oppressed position of young musicians in Tunisia, and of their tactical choice to search for alternative spaces, forms and channels of engagement in order to reach out to wider publics. In post-Ben Ali Tunisia, it has implied a careful blend of local and transnational influences into cultural production in terms of rhythm and genres, instruments, performances, language and the discourses used in the lyrics. As such, it can be conceived as the mode by which young Tunisian musicians claim to be taken seriously and also as a way to command respect, power and authority from others.

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Egyptian Youth-led Civil Society Organizations: Alternative Spaces for Civic Engagement?

Ehaab D. Abdou and Loubna H. Skalli

Introduction and Context

I think any kind of civic engagement is political because you have to think of the long term ... it is all fluid and could develop, especially as we are all self-censored and we were brought up to fear politics, and politics is haram [illicit]. I think everything we do is political and is somehow connected to politics. Many of the people from our NGOs were there during the 18 days of Tahrir Revolution ... the simple idea of being a member is very powerful because you meet like-minded people and this gives hope that you are not alone; even the simple sense of not being alone is powerful, you know at the right time it can become political.

> Co-founder of an initiative that supports youth civic engagement in Egypt. Interviewed by authors, 2014.

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The statement above captures the complex dimensions of politics and political action in Egypt. Given the authoritarian context of the country, the statement speaks to the fluid boundaries of politics and what could be called 'indirect' or 'unspoken' political action. This fuzzy demarcation, intentionally created at times, is an important dimension of youth civic engagement that has been overlooked in the growing research on Middle Eastern and North African young people. Yet, understanding their active roles in seemingly non-political civil society organizations (CSOs) can help explain how and why Egyptian youth took on leadership roles during what has come to be termed the 'Arab Spring', at least during the early days of January 2011 that led to the overthrow of President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak and his National Democratic Party. It could also lead to better understanding of the situation after the subsequent

June 2013 uprisings that led to the overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood rule, leading to a return of military-backed rule led by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. As an emerging power to contend with in the on-going changes in Egypt, young people have confirmed that they are not disengaged from political and civic action as had been assumed by many; and, second, the spaces of their political engagements and activities have remained, with few exceptions (e.g. El Mahdi and Marfleet 2009; Lust-Okar and Zerhouni 2008; Onodera 2009, 2015; Shehata 2008), largely misunderstood and under-researched (Ibrahim and Hunt-Hendrix 2011).

Young people's embodied experiences of marginalization not only fuelled their revolutionary spirit but also brought them together against the sources of their marginalization despite differences in class, gender, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Since the late 1990s, youth have been involved in and have established some of today's prominent organizations including *Resala, the Youth Association for Population and Development, Alashanek Ya Balady,* and *Nahdet El Mahrousa*. Such work was motivated by a growing sense of dissatisfaction, captured by surveys including the Gallup-Silatech Index which showed that in 2011 fewer than 25 per cent of young Egyptians were satisfied with availability of affordable housing, a sharp decrease from 42 per cent only two years earlier in 2009. The percentage of those satisfied with the government's efforts to deal with poverty and growing inequalities decreased sharply in the same period from 52 per cent to 30 percent (Kharas and Abdou 2012, 8). Hence, one of the timely questions to explore is precisely the connection between non-political civil society and political activism that provides spaces for youth to challenge and change this unsatisfactory reality.

In this chapter we focus on youth-led civil society organizations (CSOs) to reveal that when many young Egyptians were shunned by institutional politics under Hosni Mubarak's authoritarianism, some gradually channelled their energies towards alternative spaces of civic engagement. Considering formal avenues of participation alone provides an incomplete picture. Thus, scholars have drawn our attention to the importance of examining various forms of participation, especially some of the often neglected long-standing informal institutions that represent alternative means for participation, such as informal neighborhood networks (e.g., Albrecht 2008; Alhamad 2008). However, little attention has gone more specifically to looking at youth-led and youth-serving initiatives and organizations. Within that literature, the sparse existing research makes no distinction between youth organizations (those created by adults for youth, with or without youth as partners) and those created and run by youth for/with youth. Although some studies have recognized the linkages between currently active youth-led organizations such as *Resala* and their

role in the January 2011 uprisings (e.g., Ibrahim and Hunt-Hendrix 2011; Sparre 2013), they tend to focus on one or two case studies rendering it difficult to generalize their findings. Other studies have focused on individual political activists who are not necessarily affiliated with youth-led organizations (e.g., Youniss, Barber and Billen 2013).

With this chapter, we seek to make a contribution to the existing literature in several ways. Firstly, we distinguish between youth-led organizations and those organizations that target youth as 'beneficiaries' of services while excluding them from all management and the decision-making processes (Delgado and Staples 2008). By youth-led CSOs we mean both formal organizations and informal initiatives that have been established and led by youth with the goal of enhancing the community's cultural, social or economic development. We then examine *how* and *why* Egyptians below 35 years of age have taken on leadership roles without adult 'tutelage' and 'guardianship', the motivations driving their investments in seemingly non-political organizations, the perceptions they have about their roles in their communities, and the outcomes they anticipate for their actions.

Our discussion draws on ethnography in Egypt and a total of 16 interviews which we conducted over the course of 2014 with young leaders, founders and active members of some of the currently most visible and active youth-led organizations. The interviews were all conducted in Arabic. Based on our analysis, in this chapter we argue that, even if these young actors are not involved in institutionalized political structures such as parties or trade unions, the larger context within which they operate, the spaces they create, the skills and knowledge they generate, are all shaped and informed by the political culture and realities. Despite the fact that these organizations self-identify as cultural and socioeconomic rather than political associations, they have provided young Egyptians with opportunities, skills, social spaces and networks that seem to undermine the rigid boundaries around, and understandings of, political action. Our findings also suggest that such alternative spaces of participation have contributed to developing the needed awareness, skills and networks that allowed young men and women to contribute politically during the January 2011 uprisings and subsequent events.

Youth Activism and the Egyptian Context

Definitions of youth civic engagement abound in European and American research and policy centres. However, when applied to young people in the Middle East and North Africa, these definitions tend to create a great deal

of conceptual confusion. Youth civic engagement is broadly defined as individual and collective action meant to generate common good for the community (O'Donoghe 2003). For some, this is done through efforts to change national and 'local policies' (Christens and Kirshner 2011, 36), while for others it is a more 'bottom-up' approach that empowers youth with the knowledge and skills to exercise their political, economic and social rights. In all cases, civic engagement is seen to prepare youth for adult roles and responsibilities in maintaining the vibrancy of a healthy democracy through a wide range of activities ranging from volunteerism to the more traditional political acts of voting (Flanagan and Christens 2011).

Our use of youth civic engagement also underscores the centrality of young people's agency and initiative in producing common good. Thus, our definition encompasses more than political engagement to include providing services (education, health, charity, etc.) to the community. This recognizes the connection that needs to be emphasized between voluntary civic engagement in non-political activities, such as charitable, faith-based or socio-economic development organizations, and engagement in political parties, for instance (Negm, Tantawi, Yehia and El Sharabassy 2012; Skalli 2012, 2013). While this connection – between the political and non-political – has been established in various contexts (Putnam 2000), analyses in the Middle East and North Africa have often failed to do so (Lust-Okar and Zerhouni 2008).

A 2010 survey of Egyptian youth produced by the Population Council (2011), surveying upward of 15,000 young people aged 10 to 29, pointed to the very low membership in political parties or movements and that less than 13 per cent of respondents were registered to vote. In terms of non-political community volunteering, the survey also revealed that less than 3 per cent of the respondents had volunteered in a civil society organization during the preceding year (ibid., 139–140). Thus, the report rightly concluded that "[c]ivic engagement of young people ... is very weak in terms of participation in groups or organized activities and in voluntary work", asserting that the collective identity and activities mainly centre around religion (ibid., 145). Youniss, Barber and Billen (2013) criticize the survey, completed only a few months before the January 2011 uprisings, for overlooking existing alternative forms of young people's civic engagement. In Egypt, as elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa, while the social and economic activities of young people and other members of civil society have been tolerated by the state, their political activities have always been subject to surveillance, discipline and punishment (Edwards 2009, 40). This applies particularly to young people who have the capacity and resources to establish CSOs or launch initiatives.

Youth engagement in Egypt has undergone different phases and waves that closely relate to the modern political history of the country. After the country's

independence from British occupation in the early 1950s, successive regimes were mostly suspicious of any political interest or engagement by youth. They also remained generally distrustful even of the largely non-political civil society organizations, which include charitable, faith-based, community service and professional associations and syndicates (Abdel Rahman 2004; Alhamad 2008; Gohar 2008; Kandil 1998). After a brief liberal era between 1923 and 1952 which witnessed a sharp increase in the number of voluntary associations (Kandil 1998), since Nasser's time in the 1950s, universities have been controlled and students' political activities restricted unless favouring the ruling party (Shehata 2008). However, despite the continued state surveillance of youth activities on and off campus, generations of students continued to seize opportunities for political mobilization, including in Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Sadat's era, Islamist groups became bolder, both on university campuses and, for instance, by being allowed to set up religious private schools (Starret 1998). Today, faith-based community service organizations remain among the longest standing and the largest in Egypt, serving millions of Egyptians (Atia 2013; Gohar 2008). However, young political activists did manage to engage in more secular spaces and causes at every possible opportunity. For instance, in the first few years of the 2000s, Egyptian youth mobilized around regional events such as the Palestinian Intifada and the invasion of Iraq. These mobilizations already signalled new forms of political participation characterized by different values, such as inclusiveness and more fluidity among ideologies (Shehata 2008). Simultaneously, Egyptian youth also started to carve out a parallel space within civil society. For youth interested in politics, in the absence of safe spaces for political participation, they sought refuge in civil society spaces, choosing less confrontational activities, some of which were in line with their strengthened religious identities (Population Council 2011). Other analysts observed an increase in the practice of entrepreneurship, which arguably indicates that youth have also been seeking to channel their networks and resources towards establishing social and business enterprises (Kharas and Abdou 2012).

Although it is difficult to provide an estimate of the number of Egyptian youth-led initiatives, and although it might be in contradiction to the Population Council (2011) survey, anecdotal information and interviews suggest an increase in young people's volunteering in various forms of civil society since the late 1990s. For instance, given the growing number of youth-led CSOs being established, in 2006 the Federation of Egyptian Youth NGOs was created including 10 of the active non-political and relatively secular non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on charity and socio-economic development (personal interview). This increase, noticed in early 2000 (Ibrahim and

Hunt-Hendrix 2011, 10), seems to have spiked after January 2011, especially among informal initiatives that are not legally registered as NGOs.

Some argue that non-political civic engagement has helped prepare youth for active participation in the early days of the January 2011 uprisings (Ibrahim and Hunt-Hendrix 2011). Sparre posits that youth groups such as *Resala,* which was established in the late 1990s and currently involves thousands of young people in a myriad of charity and development activities, helped maintain momentum during the first few weeks of the uprisings. She contends that, along with the *Kifaya* (Enough!) movement – a prodemocracy coalition established in the early 2000s to call for democratic changes – and the 6th of April political movement – a youth-led movement built around supporting labor strikes in 2008, organizations such as *Resala* clearly contributed to "paving the way for the success of the protesters in overthrowing Mubarak" through volunteering during the demonstrations (2013, 178).

The Study

Given the increasing number and visibility of youth-led organizations and initiatives in Egypt, our interviews with 16 young Egyptian men and women seek to determine the motivations of establishing and taking on leadership roles in CSOs. We examine the promises and challenges their efforts meet within the larger socio-economic and political realities of the country in post-2011 Egypt. The interviews were conducted via Skype since both researchers were in North America during the time of the interviews. Nearly half of our interviewees are women, who, along with male interviewees, are middle class Egyptians aged 21 to 40 hailing from relatively privileged backgrounds and largely based in Cairo or Alexandria. Except for three of the interviewees who were engaged in these CSOs on a fulltime basis for a salary, the rest had other fulltime jobs in either the corporate, academic or non-profit sectors. It is worth noting that over the past few years, the co-authors of this chapter have also been engaged in the youth-led civil society spaces of the Middle East and North Africa region, both as researchers and activists. Our approach to this study is largely informed by our joint interests in exploring youth civic engagement through the perspectives of educational and cultural studies.

All the youth initiatives examined are local, home-grown and membership-based CSOs. Nine are legally established as NGOs and four are established as companies, while the rest are in the process of forming a legal entity. With the exception of four initiatives, all were established in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Many of those registered as companies do so to avoid the restrictive NGO

law under which organizations set up as NGOs must operate. The wide range of activities they represent includes non-formal learning (e.g., an online platform for alternative education), community development (e.g., a solid waste management company and a micro-finance NGO targeting female-headed households), and peace education (e.g., an informal network of organizations that promotes peace and nonviolent conflict resolution). Their activities also cover civic engagement (e.g., an initiative training young people on sustainable development methods and a company promoting self-expression and social change through art), and intermediary support organizations that offer financial and technical support to youth-led CSOs (e.g., a match-making platform between CSOs' needs and community resources). None of them explicitly declares human rights or political activities among their objectives. Given the on-going political volatility in Egypt, we have respected the respondents' wishes for confidentiality.

To address our research questions, interview data were analyzed through an open coding scheme (Butler-Kisber 2010), and a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) through which key themes were identified. We organize our analysis of the interviews into three broad thematic clusters that emerged from analysing the respondents' narratives: the first focuses on youth CSOs as alternative spaces of engagement, highlighting their inevitable engagement with on-going political, social and economic processes in the country. The second focuses on the larger goals and ambitions of the CSOs despite the challenges they face. The last theme emphasizes the promise of the CSOs in engaging various sectors of society in community development and problem solving.

Analysis and Discussion: Negotiating and Redefining the Youth-led Civil Society Space

Alternative Spaces of Engagement
The interviewees seem to have grown up in cultures of fear of everything and anything political. In this sense, they are not different from the majority of Egyptian youth. General awareness of political repression and personal experiences of the state's violence created an environment of fear where families encouraged their children to abandon all forms of civic engagement, regardless of the virtues this could have. Hence, many experienced resistance from their families and their friends. Others were misunderstood and 'mocked' for wasting their time. As one respondent put it: "Friends and family don't really understand what I do … so I have to water it down and simplify it when I explain what

I do. However, within the community of change agents, there is much respect for what I do." What this respondent has difficulty explaining is his promotion of critical thinking and problem solving through the online collaborative learning platform he helped launch. Since the January 2011 uprisings, however, most have noticed an emerging 'counterculture' of support and appreciation of their work. According to a respondent, friends in the corporate sector "envy" him for pursuing his passion and leaving the sector in order to do so.

Neither family nor school has contributed adequately to equipping them with the skills needed to establish or be actively engaged in activities and organizations that aim to bring about positive social change. Although there were only a few extra-curricular student activities available to them, some were active on their university campuses (student union, international summer camps, etc.), while others sought opportunities beyond campus. Only one respondent was involved in a purely religious activity off campus while the rest were involved in secular activities. A few benefited from their exposure to models of civic engagement through travels or study abroad programs. One respondent became active after the events of September 11th 2001 when he was studying in Canada, where he felt the need to organize the community to counter the negative image of Arabs and Muslims. For him, the need to act, as a threatened and misunderstood minority, was the beginning of his civic engagement, which has expanded since his return to Egypt in 2004; there he started by getting involved in civic engagement preparation programs, then established his own community development foundation to serve one of Cairo's poorest neighbourhoods.

Nearly all respondents critiqued Egypt's formal education, whether basic or higher levels, for failing to impart knowledge about or the skills to undertake civic engagement, or means and opportunities whereby they could assume effective roles in the wider processes of social change. Most of them ended up selecting careers that were unrelated to their degrees. Stemming from that disillusionment with formal education, at least two of the respondents launched organizations to provide alternative educational and learning visions based on creative thinking and experiential learning. As one put it, "We want to encourage critical thinking and political thinking. Critical thinking is my first weapon to use as a citizen."

Interestingly, this overall climate of fear and discouragement of anything political has shaped the nature of young people's engagement. While discouraging any form of political engagement and activism, Ibrahim and Hunt-Hendrix find that it was easier for youth "to gain approval for social service from their families" (2011, 21). Indeed, the political realities in Egypt have dictated young people's politics of survival and accommodation, which often translated into their search for alternative channels to direct their ambitions for change.

Some respondents described their engagement with and response to the community's needs and priorities, specifically in the areas of education and health services. Other respondents talked about their initial involvement in charity or relief work, before deciding to focus on longer-term sustainable development efforts. Conversely, others have had to add charity and relief activities when their sustainable development activities could not cater to more immediate needs in the community, such as food and shelter.

Some of the respondents used the term 'parallel society' to refer to a counterculture they believed they were contributing to establishing collectively. To elaborate, in reflecting on what they had set out to do, the respondents talked about their ambition to create an alternative space where they can embody their ideal values and vision for the country, based on models of transparency and the full participation of youth and other traditionally marginalized groups. Although the vision was not always clearly articulated, and the creation of a 'parallel society' was not always self-conscious in the early stages of their initiatives, their desire to trigger change was always a driving force. Some respondents spoke about an emerging youth-led global consciousness that believes in a fairer and more equitable society manifesting itself in new initiatives, new art and other forms challenging the status quo. Acting on these ideals under a repressive regime has urged respondents to adopt a politics of survival and accommodation which has dictated their strategies regarding the legal status of their initiatives, their choice of service sector and self-censorship, as we further discuss below.

Legal Status

The legal framework governing civil society activities (especially Law 84/2002) gives the government full control to intervene in activities, to even close down and liquidate assets of any association it might deem inappropriate, without being required to provide detailed explanations (Gohar 2008). It also allows the government to approve or reject requests to access foreign funding (Law 84/2002 Article 58), which is a process often characterized by long delays affecting these NGOs' ability to plan or sustain their activities. To avoid some of these difficulties, some of the respondents opted to either establish their initiatives as companies or maintain loosely organized, unregistered networks. While 'non-political' youth-led NGOs have traditionally faced less harassment than human rights and advocacy groups, post-Arab Spring regimes have become increasingly suspicious and vigilant about the activities of young people.

Since the presidency of El-Sisi commenced in June 2014, the state has reinstalled full control over universities (Abd Rabbuh 2014; El Khawaga 2014; Sayed Ahmed 2014) and ushered in a new era of crackdown on civil society. In mid-2014, the ministry of social solidarity – overseeing all NGO and foundation

work in Egypt – issued an ultimatum to all groups involved in activities that could possibly be considered similar to NGO activities, to register as NGOs within few months. Otherwise, they would face legal investigation (Hellyer 2014; Khater 2014). This new requirement suggests that the regime, like its predecessors, is aware of youth initiatives and the potential role of non-political CSOs in preparing young people for political engagement and mobilization. A new NGO law, under discussion by successive Egyptian parliaments since 2012, introduces a few improvements on its predecessor; however, it generally maintains the same restrictions that CSOs face regarding crucial issues such as the need for a government approval for registration and scope of activities, and their access to funding (The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), 2016).

Service Sector

The highly volatile post-2011 period has encouraged most respondents to consciously invest in sectors and activities that do not directly address political processes or issues. Whether their initiatives were created before or after 2011, many invested in initiatives or companies focusing on business entrepreneurship, education, training and job creation, or cultural understanding and tolerance. Even if some of these activities might seem similar to the non-political activities they carried out in the pre-2011 years, respondents made sure to point out that youth leading these efforts are now approaching them with a sharpened understanding of their role in encouraging wider awareness and civic engagement in order to contribute to the ultimate desired change. Other forms that were cited included recently established runners' or cycling clubs in large Egyptian cities. Respondents saw these as indirectly challenging the status quo through promoting a sense ownership of public spaces and streets.

Self-censorship

During the interviews most respondents were cautious of presenting their views about the political situation and possible implications of their political judgments. We are cognizant that conducting interviews over Skype might have omitted critical insights that respondents would have otherwise expressed in person. Self-censorship is a dominant adaptation and survival strategy used by many, including youth groups, vis-à-vis the authorities and other partners who might not share their vision. For instance, one of the respondents, who leads the largest platform for non-formal learning in Egypt, elaborated on how he had to refine his language based on discussions with some older, higher-education academics who strongly criticized his proposed

non-formal learning approaches, seeing them as clear threats to the order of the academic establishment.

Significantly, key concepts were visibly missing in the respondents' narratives. Although 'social justice' lies at the core of youth-led community organizing, their purposes and self-definition (Delgado and Staples 2008, 26), it was absent from most of the interviews. This omission could point to conscious self-censorship whereby these leaders are deliberately distancing themselves from views that sound seemingly radical or revolutionary. The term 'social justice' has become heavily loaded given its use as a unifying slogan chanted by peaceful demonstrators during the 2011 uprisings. Alternatively, the omission could suggest that social justice is not at the core of their agendas or consciousness. While human rights and advocacy groups have largely framed their efforts within these concepts and definitions, these youth-led nonpolitical CSOs have clearly avoided that. Finally, since most respondents come from relatively privileged backgrounds, as mentioned above, social justice might be an important, though not the primary, motivation of their work.

Because the space within which youth operate is political and politicized, youth-led CSOs interact with and adapt to the regime in ways that allow them to survive and potentially thrive. The politics of survival leads them to give a different legal status to their initiatives or invest in 'strictly' social, economic or cultural issues. Being non-political may be a self-conscious choice that engages with the political realities of the country. In the increasingly ideologically polarized Egyptian society, it has been helpful for some youth to maintain that 'ideological neutrality' to be able to better navigate differences and garner needed support and possible human and financial resources for their causes.

Such neutrality was characteristic of the political movements of the 2000s, which Shehata argues were "predominantly non-ideological in nature" with an overriding commitment to "human rights, pluralism, democracy, and social justice" (2008, 6). Just as important, a respondent reminded us, is that we need to acknowledge and use "politics in the broad meaning of the term". He further explains that rather than advocating any one ideology, his CSO seeks to "give youth all options and seek to empower them in general to be effective citizens". Despite the obvious political implications of their work, like several others we interviewed, this respondent refrained from openly declaring their CSO's work political.

Politics of survival aside, most respondents talked about responding to concrete, identified needs in the community as the major motivator for action. Many, for instance, identified the poor quality of services (education, sanitation, housing, etc.) in working class neighbourhoods or informal settlements. Many respondents turned their attention specifically to the basic unmet needs

of children in marginalized communities. Thus, despite fear of the vigilant state and misunderstanding and discouragement from their friends, family and surroundings, virtually all spoke about how they had mobilized their social capital, resources and knowhow to launch their initiatives. However, an important question remains as to the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives that target underprivileged neighbourhoods when they are established by relatively privileged outsiders who might not necessarily understand the real needs, priorities, social dynamics and networks governing these areas.

Defragmenting Spaces, Creating Networks

The strict laws regulating CSOs in Egypt have not weakened the motivation of youth-led CSOs to bring about positive social change. The restrictions have, nevertheless, imposed a situation where youth initiatives operate in a fragmented and uncoordinated fashion. In this context, suspicion and mistrust of those aiming to effect social change emerges as a common element. One respondent speaks directly to this: "There is some suspicion – when I travel abroad for example – questions from neighbours about travel and why? ... Silly loaded jokes about foreign funds, clearly inspired by conspiracy theories ... But there are mechanisms to overcome these fears and misconceptions and also not to allow them to de-motivate you." Foreign funding has been continually equated with foreign power intervention and meddling in internal Egyptian affairs; this narrative has often been deployed by the Egyptian government as a pretext to crackdown on activists and civil society groups (e.g., Gohar 2008; ICNL 2016; Onodera 2015). Recent escalations have instigated travel bans, frozen personal assets, and filed lawsuits against the most prominent Egyptian human rights activists (ICNL 2016).

Virtually all respondents identified the fragmentation of civil society activities as a major challenge to be overcome in the long-term. Indeed, interviews are rife with reference to the need to build 'networks' and invest in 'coordination' and 'collaboration'. While some hold the regime responsible for this fragmentation, other respondents blame the whole 'development industry', its rigidity and its being donor-driven as opposed to responding to the communities' needs and priorities. As one respondent put it, "The overuse of the development narrative has pushed us to work in silos or moulds. I can't and do not want to classify [our organization] in rigid terms of development or education." Vying over limited local and foreign funding sources, which is further exacerbated by state-imposed restrictions on access to funding, has allowed a competition paradigm to dominate as opposed to one that is based on coordination and collaboration (Abdou et al. 2011; Abdou and El-Ebrashi 2015).

In recognizing the need to defragment currently divided civil society spaces, respondents were critical of CSOs in general and of their own work. However, it was not clear if any of them, especially those established before 2011, critically revisited any of their own strategies or approaches after 2011. Several of the respondents spoke about the need for civil society at large to make better connections between what they see as real 'grassroots' work and policymaking. Others mentioned the importance of developing think tanks to guide policy decisions. This line of thought reflects a growing conviction that civil society actors need to play a more deliberative role beyond the traditional charity work or socio-economic development with which they are involved. Indeed, respondents articulated a strong need for greater advocacy and policy reform organizations. Some regarded their own interventions as short-term remedies to address specific socio-economic needs, while retaining the long-term goal of building sustainable and 'strong, functional formal organizations' that could help tackle more deeply rooted structural issues.

Between Autonomy and Institutionalization

Although youth CSOs constitute a relatively new sector, several respondents realize that their impact is contingent on their success in balancing between autonomy and institutionalization (i.e., establishing formal organizations), as well as balancing the ideals of doing good for the community and the pragmatism of entering into partnership with the public and/or private sector. This entails maintaining the right distance from power centres or transitioning to formal politics. Some experience these balancing acts as inhibiting challenges, while others consider them unavoidable dilemmas with potential rewards.

Fear of institutionalization was a serious concern for many respondents. Most of them did not seriously consider setting up a legal entity except: (1) to avoid being labelled a threat to the regime or an underground group with serious and negative repercussions; and/or, (2) to access certain funding that requires such a legal set-up. One of the respondents decided to dissolve his initiative a few years after he had legally registered it as a company. His initiative sought to use various artistic mediums and tools to encourage people to voice their opinions and express themselves, especially in public spaces. For him, institutionalization had killed the 'initial spirit' that launched his loose network. Belonging to and developing formal organizations is apparently done to appease the authorities or abide by the rules, but in none of the cases was it seen as a goal or an aim. These leaders seemed to be both aware of these burdens and fearful of 'becoming too much like the system' once they conform to the dictates of the regime, as some respondents stated. This is understandable

given the amount of reporting and paper work needed to register which then had to be provided on a regular basis to the relevant governmental entities (Kharas and Abdou 2012); several of the respondents found this overwhelming and restrictive.

Nonetheless, some interviewees saw collaborating and partnering with the private and/or public sector as an opportunity to scale up their initiatives to have a wider reach and greater impact. As one respondent put it, there are 'open and progressive individuals who believe in change and are trying to help and support CSOs, but you need to find the right people within the government agencies and relevant ministries'. For another, rigidity inhibits all potential collaboration as was explained:

> The initial idea was to have a strategic partnership with [the] Ministry of Education. However, due to [the] volatility of agreements with the Ministry, we sensed a lack of seriousness or ability to commit. For instance, in a draft agreement that we were discussing, the Ministry unilaterally added a clause stating that [our organization] will have to abide by traditional educational tools and methods. This, for us, would defeat the purpose of the agreement, which was to help the Ministry adopt innovative approaches.

Autonomy of CSOs is perceived as key to entering and exiting political action. One of the key themes that emerged, and that was deliberately probed in the interviews, relates to getting involved politically after January 2011 through joining or helping found political parties. Most of the respondents maintained their non-political civil society involvement, but most of those spoke about politics having been their priority for that short period in the recent history of the country. However, due to the disillusionment they experienced with formal political processes, including the lack of vision, elitism and short-sightedness of some of these political movements, they decided to return and channel their energies back to civil society. However, as was obvious from the interviews, their return to civil society after January 2011 came with at least two new realizations that were clear across the board. First, they returned with a stronger conviction and belief in the significant role civil society has to play in terms of development and awareness-building among people as a prerequisite for any sustainable political change. Second, they returned from the brief political engagement with a better grasp of the bigger picture and hence a clearer understanding of their role as civil society leaders.

By late 2014, most respondents spoke of a strengthened sense of confidence, purpose and collective identity since their shared lived experience of the uprisings. Although post revolution regimes restricted freedom of expression and

issued tough laws restricting freedom of association, the respondents seemed optimistic about the long-term future. The uprisings have helped them encounter other individuals and groups with a similar vision and commitment for change.

The connection between young people's involvement in non-political CSOs and their role in political mobilization seems to have become more clearly established in their consciousness after the January 2011 uprisings. As one respondent put it: "Because this is a space where we get together and engage with problems, it is as much politics as you can get." Yet, many respondents were quick to comment that recent political movements reveal a serious lack of vision, civic skills and capacity among some youth-led CSOs. Predictably, the criticism made by these leaders about their disillusionment with politics points to the fact that the skills developed by some of their initiatives could be lacking in political orientation and not playing a role in familiarizing young people with the realities of politics.

Conclusion

Over the years since 2011, young Egyptians – once again alienated by the political establishment – have continued to carve out their own spaces within the country's civil society. With mounting restrictions imposed on Egyptian civil society at large and the regime's specific vigilance towards young people who have demonstrated their potential in mobilizing mass protests and opposition, it is to be expected that Egyptian youth will have to continue to seek alternative spaces through which to channel their energies and resources towards their ultimate vision for social change. The study also shows that early involvement in civic activities, as already established by scholarship on youth civic engagement (Flanagan and Christens 2011; Youniss, McLellan and Yates 1997), has been instrumental in building the skills, knowledge and confidence of our respondents. No matter how hard an authoritarian regime seeks to depoliticize youth and civil society spaces, civic engagement has the potential to keep politics front and centre. Youniss et al. (2002) rightly argue that there is a continuum between formal political acts and other forms of community service. Our data points to this continuum in the way the founders of these initiatives, who are directly interested in politics, enter and exit political spaces and activities. Virtually all our participants engaged in civil society with no prospects of engaging in 'formal' politics. Yet many had taken part in political action during the revolutionary moment, only to retreat back to CSOs in response to post-revolution disillusionment with politics and political activism.

It is also important not to over-romanticize youth CSOs as entities fighting for justice and equality. Our respondents did not launch their initiatives with social justice as their primary motivation, nor can they claim to have created spaces free from power struggles and class distinction. In her critical study, Abdel Rahman argues that overall, Egyptian civil society, unknowingly in most cases, reinforces "unequal relations and an unjust status quo" (2004, 1). Alhamad (2008, 39) has also critiqued many formal NGOs across the Middle East for the "elite nature" embodied in some of the issues they choose focus on, which might be important but which are controversial, such as women and human rights, thus limiting their ability to mobilize larger segments of society. Our analysis of youth-led CSOs in Egypt confirms that Bourdieu's (1973) 'cultural reproduction' is at work. Given the relatively privileged middle-class upbringing of the founders of the majority of the large initiatives and their access to elitist education and social capital, they unintentionally participate in the reproduction of societal power structures. For instance, as mentioned above, it remains to be seen how sustainable some of their efforts to serve less privileged neighbourhoods are, given that those efforts were not necessarily implemented in full collaboration with youths from these communities. Abdel Rahman problematizes that situation, finding that most of these CSOs attempted to "alleviate poverty" as opposed to challenging "structural inequalities" (2004, 197). She also finds that, in terms of class structures, these organizations "inject the values of their class and the bureaucracy of their professional life into the NGOs" (2004, 198).

Even if these CSOs deliberately reached out to marginalized and disadvantaged young people to encourage their active participation, these marginalized youths' lack of resources (including time and money) put them at a disadvantage since they are not familiar with the culture of the dominant class and are not savvy in using its instruments. They lacked what Bourdieu calls "the system of predispositions that is the condition for the success of the transmission and of the inculcation of the culture" (1973, 80). Their exclusion is happening both overtly and subtly, in many cases perpetrated by these CSOs themselves, which are still using a language and tools that unintentionally alienate and exclude marginalized groups. Institutionally, the Egyptian NGO law is discriminatory in its requirement that founders of prospective NGOs must own or rent premises for their headquarters, and submit proof of that, even to be considered for official registration (Law 84 2002; personal interviews).

However, we also found a critical self-awareness emerging in some of the interviews. Actors from these CSOs see their work as having an enormous potential to contribute to the empowerment of a new generation of young social and economic actors. Some speak about the empowerment that comes with

being part of 'something bigger' and having 'ownership', while others stress the power of networks, coordinated efforts and coalition building. These ambitions explain the optimism expressed by virtually all respondents despite the possible reinvention of a new authoritarianism in Egypt. This is captured by the following respondent who sees great promise in building capacity and creating awareness "since the notion that each of us has a role and that I, as an individual, have something to contribute, means we have more and more people seeing themselves as part of civil society". Perhaps the most significant expression of this optimism is the continued investment of many of these leaders and their persistence in generating common good despite the mounting uncertainties and continued crackdown on freedom of expression and association that define post-2011 political developments in Egypt. Such commitment is not only fed by these leaders' ideals and beliefs in their initiatives' and organizations' missions, but also seems to be further fuelled by their ability to overcome the barriers of fear during their involvement in the 2011 uprisings that ousted Mubarak, and the events subsequent to that.

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Taking the Forbidden Space: Graffiti and Resistance in Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Mulumebet Zenebe

Introduction

Pietrosanti suggests that graffiti is about "taking spaces otherwise forbidden" (2010, 72), while Ferrell (1995) states that young men and women employ graffiti as a means of resisting particular constellations of political and religious authorities. In this chapter, graffiti around the University of Addis Ababa campus is studied as a form of the writers' self-expression. In research on graffiti, the graffiti artist is seen as negotiating a myriad of conflicted relationships between seen and unseen, space and place, local and global, and quiet and loud. Graffiti has also been interpreted as having the potential to communicate the common visions of politics that the young talk about with each other, and that unite people as members of a larger community, both local and global (Truman 2010, 10). What can the silent drawings on Ethiopian university walls and tables reveal to a researcher on youth and politics?

Ajayi argues that the capacity for independent thought and expression has not been encouraged in African countries and, consequently, students in African universities pay a heavy price for free expression (Ajayi cited in Balsvik 2007, 3). In this regard, Addis Ababa University is no different from the higher education institutions of other African countries. Established in the 1950s, it is one of the oldest and largest universities in Africa yet, with regards to freedom of expression, the previous and current regimes of Ethiopia can be regarded as repressive and, as Balsvik (2007, 2) observes, "Since the universities are key state institutions, conditions for free expression even within the university campuses are highly dependent on the actions and reactions of the regimes in power."

The repressive environment in Ethiopia encourages students to opt for hidden forms of expression. Since the establishment of the university, students have not been encouraged to write on topics like politics and religion. For example, in one of the first rounds of Addis Ababa University student papers known as UC Calls, students were encouraged to "write on any topic under the sun, except on politics and religion" (Bahru 2014, 78); pseudonyms were

a common feature of student publications, with writers using pen names such as "Temariw" (the Student), "Lelaw Temari" (the Other Student) and "Teyaqiw" (the Enquirer) (Bahru 2014, 79). Although there were changes over the years and the university made a significant contribution to the student movement in Ethiopia, students still prefer to use hidden forms of expression to air their views, especially on certain issues that are considered sensitive and controversial. Graffiti, often associated with resistance and rebellion (Nielenberg 1994), combines different linguistic and artistic forms to express messages of a personal and social nature. It is a form situated between visual and verbal expression that often reveals something about the lives, relationships and identities of those who produce it (Pietrosanti 2010, 1). With reference to Addis Ababa University, Balsvik states that "[t]he conditions for creating, practicing and developing a political culture of dialogue and openness in Addis Ababa University from the 1960s until the turn of the century were discouraging" (2007, 177), and it is mainly due to this lack of freedom that young people opt for anonymity when expressing themselves.

This chapter examines the various ways in which the youth at Addis Ababa University express their concerns through graffiti and, specifically, the lived dynamics of graffiti production in the context of legal and political power and social control. A major question that the paper explores is the type of authority the graffiti is attempting to resist, thereby invoking the larger cultural and political context in which the graffiti at the university proliferates. Peteet (1996, 155) writes that "[g]raffiti should be contextualized in sets of power relations and structures and the forms of resistance these entail"; therefore, in order to derive meaning from a particular work, it is necessary to examine the context in which the graffiti appears. Another focus of the chapter are the interactions through which writers surprise and challenge one another. In some of the graffiti, two or more writers appear to exchange words in the form of a dialogue, although, since the graffitists work in private, it is difficult to be certain whether they are one or multiple individuals. While dialogue would suggest different writers, particularly when opposing ideas are exchanged, it is possible that a single person has used the format to try to convince the reader that a conversation took place. Finally, while the chapter pays attention to the particular meanings of authority and resistance in the everyday experience of the university students, it is important to note that the graffiti artists do not present a unified voice, and not all graffiti is progressive.

The methodological framework for the examination of graffiti writing at Addis Ababa University incorporates observation and document research. The graffiti in the main campus, which has the largest number of students and hosts the major activities of the university, was collected from 2014 to 2016

from the walls of the university libraries, toilets and class rooms, and from girls' dormitories with the help of female students. Furthermore, the writer has used her Addis Ababa University graffiti collection from 1997.

Most of the graffiti at the university consists of words and statements written in the local language, Amharic, and English, sometimes with the addition of drawings to illustrate the writers' points. For example, the female body would mostly be drawn next to a message about women in general and female sexuality in particular. All the graffiti used in this chapter written in Amharic has been translated into English.

Resisting Authority

The major message of the graffiti in the main campus is resistance to authority: the writers have reached out to their desired audience to communicate anti-establishment ideas. As mentioned above, there are certain subjects students are not encouraged to write about, yet the majority of recorded graffiti was in the form of written statements. This suggests that advancing a certain ideology is a key intention of graffiti at Addis Ababa University, with graffiti writers putting forward their opinions and perspectives on an issue considered important but usually controversial. "Graffiti, then, are little insights, little peepholes into the minds of individuals who are spokesmen not only for themselves but for others like them" (Reisner 1971). Yet it is important to note that graffiti scribblings do not only comprise resistance messages but also present other social issues. As Zakareviciute (2014, 109) observes:

> Although approaching graffiti as the dominated's resistance against the dominator indeed explains a wide realm of this societal conduct, it nevertheless regards graffiti only as pro or counter statement. Therefore quite often, significant side-meanings and social perceptions on various issues are omitted.

The graffiti writers at Addis Ababa University express their opinions privately but in public and we may assume that these are opinions they would not dare to offer in person. Three strongly pronounced themes emerge: sexuality, religion and politics; in the Ethiopian cultural and political context all the three are considered highly sensitive. The most common theme, sexuality, mainly consisted of statements related to female sexuality. Religious and anti-religious statements were frequent. Derogatory statements about some ethnic groups were also observed.

Sexuality

Graffiti is said to be subversive as it presents issues like sexuality which are considered taboo (Nielenberg 1994); therefore, it is not surprising that sexuality is so common in graffiti since it has been one of the most avoided subjects in public conversation (Reisner 1971), not least in Ethiopia where the subject of sex is publicly shrouded in silence (Rachel 2001, 3). Talking about sex in public is considered culturally taboo as Ethiopian tradition demands *chewanet* (decency). Rather, in Ethiopia, oral literature – the commonest mode of transmitting the deeply entrenched norms of society – is a significant means of expression of sexuality and related matters, and thoughts and attitudes are more freely expressed in this medium than in formal settings and languages. People express their feelings and emotions without much reservation through oral and written literature and, concomitantly, it has been suggested that graffiti's sexual content could provide insight into the extent and nature of people's suppressed sexual desires (Trahan 2011).

The graffiti writers at Addis Ababa University defy the norm and write about sexual matters that are not openly mentioned or discussed on walls and tables. Frequently, responses appear below the original messages so that viewers can read the graffiti dialogue as it occurs over time. In some instances the first writer is supported by the second who tries to add to what the first writer said and/or include some words of appreciation. Some of the writers draw or describe genitals in an exaggerated manner. Others would like the readers to know that sex is important, as elaborated on these graffiti written on a classroom wall and a library reading table:

> *No Sex – No Life*
> The way to heaven is sex.

It is only when we look at the context in which the graffiti appears that we realize that the writers are resisting what is considered normal. In a country like Ethiopia where religion plays a major role in organizing people's lives, stating that sex is the way to heaven is total subversion. Furthermore, it is believed that engaging with sexual matters places people outside the boundaries of morality, making them unstable. While the norm strictly endorses religious rules and rituals; the writers of the above graffiti openly declare the opposite.

Parents interviewed in the capital, Addis Ababa, stated that they would take serious measures if they found out that their daughters were having sexual relationships with men (Mulumebet 2006). Both religion and Ethiopian tradition and society are extremely repressive regarding sexual expression,

especially women's sexual expression (e.g. Rachel 2001) and the graffitists at the university are writing in an environment where discussion about sexual matters is restricted. "Since the inscriptions are anonymous, and located in restricted, hidden, or remote places, they must be done by those who wouldn't dare express their erotic interests openly where they could be identified" (Reisner 1971). It is common to find writings expressing interest to have sexual relations as shown in the following two graffiti written on library reading tables:

> Women who would like to have sex with me, please call me.
> I would like to have a boyfriend and have sex with him.
> *Response*: I am interested. Please write me with the following email address

This response endorses the original writer's graffiti, but it is observable that some responses to graffiti with sexual content take the form of criticism, mainly stressing that indulgence in sexual matters is immoral. Those who criticize the original writers usually give religious reasons because, in many instances, religious morality and sexual morality are considered the same. The need to control sexual desire and not to fall into the trap of *Siga* (the flesh) is emphasized as it is considered that suppressing sexual feelings is a way to protect oneself from the evils of the world. As Foucault (1978) notes, in Christian doctrine more generally the pleasures of the flesh are regarded as evil and sinful and should be renounced.

Most young students leave their families for the first time when they go to university and, while they were living with their parents, they rarely discussed sexual matters. This ban does not only apply to sexuality; children are not allowed to speak out in other areas either. The many Ethiopian sayings and jokes about children's ignorance and the importance of silencing them illustrate this. In Ethiopia, parent–child relationships are very formal and authoritarian and children's opinions are rarely sought (Mulumebet 2006). Indeed, there is a surprisingly similar attitude to child sexuality as in Foucault's reading of the European Victorian period:

> Everyone knew, for example, that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it, why one closed one's eyes and stopped one's ears whenever they came to show evidence to the contrary, and why a general and studied silence was imposed (1978, 4).

The main reason for silencing childhood sexuality is to control.

Young men and women in Ethiopia are not enthusiastic about discussing sexual matters with parents and family members but girls disapprove of these discussions more than boys (Taffa et al. 1999 cited in Getnet 2009). Then, in contrast with their childhoods, young men and women in Ethiopian universities have the new experience of being able to discuss sexual matters, and graffiti and jokes are two of the media widely used for this. The graffiti writings on sexual matters are not, however, merely subversive: they mainly focus on women's sexuality, depicting women's sexual bodies negatively as unclean and unpleasant. Next to the descriptions, there are sometimes drawings portraying the human genitals or other sexual organs, and responses either criticizing the writers or showing appreciation for their open descriptions. The following two graffiti are examples of the negative depiction of women's sexual bodies:

> Even if the vagina is ugly, we still continue having sex.
> Women, you should know your vagina is not clean.

This negative portrayal of women's sexuality can also be seen in the way women's sexual organs are depicted in society. In Ethiopia, not only graffiti but jokes and oral poems also depict the sexuality of women as unpleasant (Mulumebet 2006), a negative perception that must be seen in relation to women's position in society. In Ethiopia, women's sexual organs and women's blood are considered unclean. In some parts of the country, women give birth unattended in an isolated hut built for the purpose because the place where women deliver their babies and everything in it is considered unclean (Meseret 2011). Hence, a man who entered the room would not be allowed to enter the church (Pankhurst 1990, 267). By the same token, parents interviewed about their children's sexual relationships said that it is more important to control girls than boys. As some said, it is appropriate to tolerate male sexual transgression as they have stronger sexual needs than women (Mulumebet 2006).

These deep-rooted negative attitudes towards women are the major causes of the inequality between the sexes which materializes in the challenges constraining women's equal participation in the social, economic and political spheres of the country (Gennet 2014: Alem 2008). The same applies to female students in Ethiopian universities. Compared to male students, female students perform less well in their studies, and harassment of, and violence against, female students is very common. The gender stereotypes that push female students to behave in a traditional manner are clearly rife even on campus, as evidenced by the graffiti on the subject. This was said to be very disturbing and upsetting for female students (FAWE 2010, 114) as it is mainly

women's sexual bodies that are portrayed negatively. While the vagina is depicted as unclean, the penis is mostly described in relation to its size, particularly the correlation of increased size with aggressive sex and women's interest in having sex with men with big penises. This different depiction of the sexual organs of men and women is a clear indication of the society's double standard in relation to men's and women's sexuality as exemplified by the following:

> Glory and Praise to King Penis!!
> Let it live as the king of vagina forever!
> *Response*: AMEN!!

It should be noted that, although the majority of the graffiti depicts men positively, according to a study in a number of public universities in Ethiopia some graffiti in female students' dormitories portrays men as unfaithful and untrustworthy (Teshome 2016).

In Ethiopia, the taboo does not only apply to sex and sexual pleasure; there are also restrictions on talk about sexual relationships and romance. Expressing love verbally is regarded as indecent. Students from all over the country come to the university and those from rural parts of Ethiopia in particular find it extremely difficult to talk openly about romantic feelings. Similarly, *Sememen*, one of the most popular Ethiopian novels, vividly depicted the challenges university students from rural Ethiopia face in connection with romantic relationships. In this closed environment, the following graffiti writer expresses his feelings about sexual relationship and love and seems to expect a response from readers:

> I am in love with a girl.
> *Response a*: Commit suicide.
> *Response b*: Be a man and ask her.
> *Response c*: Focus on your study.
> If you want to discuss about love, please email me at gxxx@postmaster .com.

Both of the above graffiti were written on a toilet wall. Some writers ask for advice and others merely want a response. Thus, viewers can read the graffiti dialogue as it occurs over time. Yet, from the way original statements are expressed, it seems that most of the writers do not expect a real response, putting telephone numbers and email addresses which do not seem to be valid.

Women as well as men express their feelings on the theme of romantic love as the following two statements written on a library reading table indicate:

> I am suffering because I am in love with a man.
> I am happy he started to love me back after two years.

In the above graffiti, however, it is not possible to be absolutely certain about the gender of the writers. From their content they appear to be written by women, but one cannot rule out the possibility of men, or a men pretending to be women. As Reisner (1971, 4) writes:

> Despite the prevalence of the fruits of their efforts, writers of graffiti are seldom seen at their labors. So, if we ask what type of individuals writes graffiti, the answer lies in the nature of the message, the place where it is written, and the spirit of the times.

Women graffiti writers at Addis Ababa University are resisting the norm that they should be silent about sexual issues. Although Ethiopian women face a number of challenges, evidence shows that they are not passive victims but try to resist oppression by various means. For example, Ethiopian women share with each other experiences about sexual relationships (see Mulumebet and Flemmen 2008) while, in a similar vein, Signe Arnfred (2004:23) argues that "the notion of 'universal female subordination' is misplaced in Africa", giving the example of the phenomenon of women choosing not to marry. Furthermore, African women have always resisted the oppression of traditional rulers.

Religion

Another issue that is repeatedly addressed in the graffiti of Addis Ababa University is religion. Again, we need to look at the context in order to clearly understand the reason for this predominance. Students of the university come from all regions of Ethiopia, bringing their own cultures and religion and the important place religion has in their lives is clearly exhibited in the large quantity of graffiti on the subject. Most of the religious messages are short declaratory statements such as "Jesus is lord", with the writers advocating their own religious ideology. Moreover, there are dialogues between the followers of different Christian sects, principally between Ethiopian Orthodox Church followers and Protestants.

Ethiopians are known for their deep religiosity (Molvaer 1980), historically being defenders of the faith rather than mere followers, as noted by Messay (1999, 111): "The wider the expansion of Islam and the consequent isolation of the Ethiopians, the deeper was their impression of being the last stronghold of Christianity, which stronghold had to withstand at all costs." One of the crucial institutions that has guided Ethiopia's history is the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the oldest national church in Africa (Belay 1992). Although both Christianity and Islam are widely followed in Ethiopia, Orthodox Christianity is the oldest and most dominant religion in the country and its religious influence can be clearly observed in the day-to-day activities of the people. Christianity emerged in Ethiopia in the mid-fourth century, possibly earlier, and gained an important role in Ethiopian life that has lasted to the present; the Orthodox, so-called Tewahedo Church is deeply rooted in Ethiopian history, social life and ethics (Abbink 2003, 2).

Following religious rules and rituals is appropriate and sometimes mandatory in order to fit into the social system (Bahiru 2002, 8) and it is in this very religious environment that graffitists communicate ideas against the establishment and criticize religion. The following three graffiti were written on classroom wall and reading tables at a library:

> Jesus is lord!
> *Response a*: Who said he is a thief?
> *Response b*: One can't make jokes about the words of God.
> Jesus will come back to this world. You need to receive Him and be saved.
> *Response*: He could come but he would be crucified and returned as usual!
> I can kill through Christ.

As we can see from the above graffiti, the writers question the authority of religion, which is also observable in the joke one respondent makes about Jesus and his crucifixion. In the third example the writer changed the popular Bible verse, "I can do whatever I need to do in life through Christ", to, "I can kill through Christ". For an Ethiopian Christian, making jokes about the word of God is considered a serious offence. Furthermore, the church is still a powerful institution in society more broadly (Bourdieu 2001, 116). When twentieth-century Ethiopian rulers tried to build a modern country out of a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, they used the institution of the church, specifically Orthodox Christianity, to promote a modern national identity. For example, Emperor Haile-Selassie, who ruled Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974, sought to build a modern national state within a framework of "religious uniformity" under the Orthodox Church (Wudu 2003, 89). Hence, for the graffiti writer, criticizing

religion can, in the Ethiopian context, be read as offering resistance to the dominant power in the country.

According to some writers, however, the Church failed to play a significant role in bringing about national unity. "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was an obstacle to secularization, modern changes, and, importantly, to the emergence of an inclusive national identity," writes Wudu (2003, 96), claiming that the attempt to create religious uniformity under the Orthodox Church marginalized other cultural, religious and linguistic groups in Ethiopia (Wudu 2003). This may be observed in the long lasting tension between the followers of different Christian sects. For example, one of the first Ethiopian reformist intellectuals of the early twentieth century, Hiruy Wolde Sellassie, urged the reform of the Orthodox Church as an imperative necessity if the challenges of Protestantism were to be withstood (Bahru 2014, 161). In a similar vein, graffiti writers of the present try to challenge the Orthodox Christianity's religious rules and rituals by citing different verses from the Bible while some of the graffiti at Addis Ababa University highlights the tension between Orthodox Christians and Protestants.

> Orthodox – The real Faith.
> *Response a*: All except Protestants worship idols.
> *Response b*: You are a newcomer.

In the first snippet, the Orthodox believer states that his/her religion is the real one, implying that other religions are wrong. The response is that the right religion is Protestantism and others worship idols, a critique which seems to be directed at Orthodox Christianity with its tradition of having the symbol of the Arc of the Covenant in churches. Then the first writer, or possibly another person with similar writing, responds stating that Protestants are newcomers, thereby claiming that his/her religion is the oldest. Abbink notes that the tension between religions is not new; Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity has "from its inception ... contended with other faiths: not only with indigenous religions and cults but also with Islam since the 7th century and with Western forms of Christianity" (Abbink 2003, 2).

It is quite obvious that the current global environment intensifies the tension between the major religions in Ethiopia. According to Abbink, "the externally supported missionary educational institutions and local churches connected to them, as well as Islamic movements and groups financed from outside" force Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity to assert itself (2003, 4). Recently, conflicts among religions, between religions and the state and within religions have

intensified (Karbo 2013, 52). The graffiti at Addis Ababa University depicts this same conflict as it is shown in the following two unconnected writings:

> People, do not make a mistake by kissing a Church wall.
> Salvation is only through Jesus Christ.

Here, the Protestant graffitist criticizes one of the major rituals in Orthodox Christianity, that of followers' kissing the walls when entering the premises of the holy place – a religious practice that has always been considered as a wrong practice by followers of Protestant religions. In the graffiti, the writer advises those who kiss the walls of the Orthodox Church to avoid the practice and follow the right path which is Jesus Christ. Another major issue of contention is the special place Saint Mary has in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. Some writers emphasized the importance of focusing on Jesus rather than Saint Mary.

> Jesus is Lord!
> *Response*: The Virgin Mary is His mother!

Some of the writings specifically focus on the religious elements that separate the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity from other Christian religions. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is known by its name "Tewahedo" (oneness), a name based on its Biblical Cannon. Unlike Christians who believe Christ to have two distinct natures, one divine and one human, followers of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia believe Christ has a divine nature in which his human nature is contained. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity has its peculiar indigenized form, with significant Judaic influences (Belay 1992; Berhanu 2000; Pankhurst 1992; Ullendorff 1965). In terms of international graffiti comparison it is interesting and unusual that Ethiopian graffiti deals with theological specifics, but this is revealing of the societal divisions and power relations in the country.

Politics

The third theme that is widely observed in the graffiti of Addis Ababa University is politics, ethnic tension and conflict. Previous studies of graffiti at the university showed that most of the writings on the walls have explicitly political messages (Mulumebet 1998). Due to the repressive nature of Ethiopian regimes, freedom of political expression has been restricted both in and

outside the university. In her study of the history of the student movement in Ethiopia, Randi Balsevik writes: "Opposition was interpreted as insurrection, as rebellion, and was considered to be against the cosmological order of things, disturbing deep cultural strands of reverence for authority" (2007, 177). It is in this environment that the graffiti writers express their dissatisfaction with the politics of the ruling party in the government and emphasize the need for change, specifically for unity and solidarity.

> Does Democracy exist in Ethiopia?
> *Response*: Never, Ever, Forever!
> In previous times it was about the prosperity of Ethiopia.
> Now it is about the destruction of Ethiopia.

These two pieces of graffiti show the dissatisfaction of the writers with the policies of the current government of Ethiopia: in the first, the government is criticized for repressing the democratic rights of the people of Ethiopia; in the second, the writer accuses the government of playing a destructive role compared with the previous regimes of Ethiopia. Graffiti in these instances has both political and social significance (Pietrosanti 2010, 55).

Ethiopian ethnic federalism and the recognition of the right to self-determination up to and including secession are designed to avoid ethnic domination. Although ethnic and cultural rights were accorded by the relevant legislation, the classification of Ethiopians primarily in terms of ethnicity and the strong territorialization of groups has given rise to new ethnic conflicts and border disputes. Hence, since 1991 ethnicity has become the most debated issue in Ethiopian politics (Abbink 2011; Institute of Peace and Security Studies 2011, 11; Zahorik 2014, 1; Karbo 2013, 43). The following three graffiti indicate the increased salience of ethnic divisions:

> Who is better than a Gonderie?
> *Response*: You are a monster because you are narrow minded and tribalist.
> Ethiopia has been divided by Woyane into small regions.
> *Response*: Let Ethiopia be divided into small towns, rather than regions.
> That is Ethiopia's problem.
> We strictly oppose ethnic politics since it has no use for our nation.

In most of the graffiti about ethnicity the denigration of, and prejudice against, certain groups by others can be clearly observed. The first piece shows how certain groups consider themselves better than others and the response

indicates one person's reaction to this stance. The other two oppose ethnic politics in general and indirectly prescribe national unity for the nation. Indeed, as Vaughan (2003, 26) notes: "There is no other single issue in Ethiopian politics as inflammatory and controversial as the 'empowerment of ethnicity', and the 'self-determination of nations, nationalities and peoples'".

Graffiti writers do not only offer resistance to existing structures but also propose alternative and better arrangements (Ferrell 1995). Ethnic federalism has been criticized for privileging ethnicity over other markers of identity like religion, class and gender, particularly given that, depending on the context, other ways of self-identification are sometimes more important than ethnicity. It is feared that the significant internalization of ethnic identities enhances mutual stereotyping and prejudice in Ethiopia (Abbink 2011, 611–612) and, indeed, most ethnic graffiti on the campus was written in the form of hate messages. In response to these messages, however, some graffiti writers encourage unity and solidarity. In the past, Addis Ababa University students fought for political freedom. "They demanded freedom of expression and assembly not only to prepare themselves for a future role as responsible citizens, but also to raise the level of political consciousness in the Ethiopian population" (Balsvik, 2005, 311). Using graffiti as a medium, students of Addis Ababa University still express their belief in the possibilities of fruitful change in Ethiopia.

Concluding Remarks

The chapter has explored the various ways in which graffiti writers in Addis Ababa University attempt to resist the control of the authorities, and has briefly examined the context of social control and political power in which the graffiti was produced. The major themes in graffiti at the university are associated with sexuality, religion, political power, ethnic differences and conflict. The graffitists have tried to reach a desired audience and communicate ideas that run counter to those of the establishment, but they have also tried to concretize or defend existing, perhaps threatened, dominant ideas, especially in terms of sexuality, religion and ethnicity. The university graffiti also incorporates interaction in which writers surprise and challenge one another. Ultimately, the writings remind us to pay attention to the particular meanings of resistance and authority in the everyday experience of youth.

The history of the Ethiopian state has been characterized as one of conflict, with varying dimensions based on class, ethnic, religious and regional sentiments. The graffiti writings analysed in this chapter are a clear indication

of the intensification of these conflicts. The discussion does not only show how sexual, ethnic and religious identities can evoke deep divisions, but suggests that it is important to pay attention to the intersections of the three categories.

Though this chapter focused on the local issues presented in Addis Ababa University graffiti, it is important to examine how the writings relate to both the global graffiti subculture and the outside world. Ethiopian youth are not free from globalizing influences; hence, it is also important to look at their political engagement in the context of global social, economic and political transformations.

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Post-Revolutionary Tunisian Youth Art: The Effect of Contestation on the Democratization of Art Production and Consumption

Mounir Saidani

Introduction

Since the sudden removal of President Ben Ali from power in Tunisia in January 2011, the country has witnessed an unprecedented number of political reforms; however, the process of social change, as crucial as it seems, has proven slower and more painful than expected. The political changes – for example, the increasing number of political parties, the succession of electoral referendums, a new constitution and new elites in power – are more apparent than any social transformation. The emergence of new social movements raising new demands on new issues gets little coverage and cultural movements even less. I argue here that Tunisian society can be characterized by a prevailing political centrism and an overvaluation of the recent political changes. Post-Ben Ali political processes have attracted disproportionate attention at the expense of cultural phenomena, especially given how much the latter contribute to social change.

My aim in this chapter is to discuss this issue from a Bourdieusian perspective, examining processes of cultural change and restructuration and how they reconfigure other fields and practices (Bourdieu 1979, 1991, 1992). In general, cultural changes are less speedy and less remarkable than other aspects of social change; nevertheless, I consider that the current evolution in the Tunisian situation (2010–2015) is a very specific one. Indeed, the country witnessed an unprecedented wave of demonstrations, turmoil and disorder that succeeded in creating a strong social movement, leading to popular uprisings and eventually political revolution. This was, and continues to be, so wide, deep and harsh that the average speed of cultural change is ever increasing.

In what follows, I discuss these issues at two coinciding levels. Firstly, I examine the structural factors and changes that have expanded the practices and opportunities of producing and consuming art among young people in the post-Ben Ali era. The important roles of information and communication technology (ICT) are given special attention, as they provide relatively inexpensive

platforms for artistic expression and better opportunities of reaching wider audiences than before. Secondly, I discuss the content of art production by members of the young generation, focusing especially on expressions of anger and contestation transmitted through rap music and graffiti. What are the objectives of these artists? Is the expansion of such expression to new and wider dimensions among their goals? Do these changes have the side effect of democratizing art production and consumption? Does such a democratization entail a new world vision?

Methodologically this chapter is based on my personal observations of, and participation in, the historic processes of Tunisian revolution since 2010. I have a longstanding academic interest in the field of young people's art production in Tunisia (Saidani 2015), especially among those between 18 and 30 years of age. Hence, since the revolution, I have observed a number of youth activities in different parts of the country, including villages and rural areas, gathering stories of, and conducting interviews with, young artists in Tunisia. Here I analyse some of these materials together with additional data collected from social networking sites and mass media.

A Changing Cultural Landscape

As shown by Gana (2012), growing numbers of young Tunisians are experiencing new forms and styles of art production. This is especially true of urban youth as actors, and rap music and graffiti in terms of genre – trends which were already detectable before the 2010 uprising. In recent years, these artistic genres have gained considerable attention in the media and in public discourses, both scientific and popular. Small bands and groups of urban youth, particularly young males committed to the Internet and new ITCs, were constituted among secondary school pupils, especially in lower-middle-class neighbourhoods at the peripheries of the country's main towns. Some of these groups or individuals could even hold spectator events attracting audiences of five to seven thousand, especially at small town festivals, although the bigger and more valuable venues are often monopolized by more established older artists (see also Bourdieu 1991).

Some of the newly-formed groups then began to experiment with ICTs as a way to distribute their art. One can describe the two main prevailing orientations of that time via the opposition between the rap song entitled "Passepartout" produced by Balti (30 years old in the summer of 2010) and one called "President of the Country" produced by El General (19 years old in the autumn of 2010). The first piece, released on YouTube in the first weeks of the summer

of 2010 – that is, some three months before the launch of the social movement in December 2010 – contained a very harsh critique of teenage girls' behaviour from a moralistic point of view. The lyrics paint a picture of hard-up girls spending their nights in bars and restaurants with wealthy males until the early hours of daylight, when they take taxis to their poor neighbourhoods on the west side of the capital (Balti 2011). The second piece, released on YouTube by the very beginning of December 2010 demonstrations, contains the same level of anger yet the critique is directed at the President 'whose people' are starving and oppressed by the police. At the beginning of the video, the President asks a poor pupil in a poor primary school if he has something to say to him. The deep and somehow apprehensive silence of the young boy is very expressive. The lyrics announce that the singer is aware that his fate will be catastrophic because of his boldness in crossing the line with this song (El General 2011).

These examples show that even before the revolution there was diversity, antagonism and opposition among young artists. Nevertheless, expressing social and political criticism was a very significant step towards a change in the conditions of art production and dissemination. Not surprisingly, the political regime sought to seize upon this new phenomenon. Some of the rappers were invited to attend the annual ceremonies celebrating the anniversary of the November 7, 1987, coup which brought Zine Alabidine Ben Ali to power, an increasingly salient event during the five last years of his rule that ended on January 14, 2011. Some of them were urged to do this and they accepted, arguing that otherwise they would not be allowed to perform.

There is some evidence that the democratization process of conditions of art production and consumption was not devoid of shortcomings. Some of the limitations on the process were imposed from the outside: political restrictions due to the repressive cultural policies of the regime, as well as technological challenges due to the lack of financial resources – a great number of young artists had no access to professional studios in order to record their music. Other limitations were produced internally: the majority of the artists were inexperienced, fell to commercial temptation and struggled with oppositional trends within the emerging community. Until the last months of 2013, in spite of a few attempts, Tunisian rappers could not organize themselves into a union or even an association.

In the post-Ben Ali era, Tunisian rappers have continued to fight for liberty of expression and to expand its limits. Despite the gradual democratization of political processes (free parliamentary and presidential elections, a new constitution, the free constitution of political parties and associations), they have often faced legal action and jail terms for what they do. In 2013, Alaa Eddine Yakoubi, a rap singer working under the name Weld El Kenz, published a song

titled "El Boulicia Kleb" (Cops are Dogs). As in other Arab dialects, in Tunisian to be like a dog is to be without values and to profit from a person in a 'predominant' position in order to oppress or humiliate someone. A dog is a subaltern acting for its superiors, performing their orders with blind fidelity. This is not especially new in Tunisia; even in 2008, one could see the letters 'A.C.A.B' scrawled on the walls of every town, an acronym for 'All Cops Are Bastards'. Putting this global English acronym on Tunisian town walls, especially in Tunis, the capital, and in other big cities, somehow connected the graffitists to international youth contestation movements. One youth community was especially active in this field, namely, football club supporters, often organized in groups with special self-designations: Ultras, Fighters, Winners, Brigade Rouge, to name a few. On weekends, when the games took place, they used to clash with security forces in and around the stadiums. But to voice that cops are all bastards in a song, to put it on YouTube (March 2013) hardly a month after the assassination of Leftist leader and spokesman for the Patriot Democratic Movement Party, Chokri Belaid, and then to perform it with Ahmed Ben Ahmed (alias 'BBG') at international festivals supported and promoted by the Ministry of Culture, such as Hammamet in August 2013, was clearly seen by state authorities as unacceptable. The following summer, in Morocco, the Tunisian rap singer was enthusiastically asked to sing "El Boulicia Kleb" by Moroccan teenagers and also older young people who had heard it on YouTube. 'National' barriers to the diffusion of art products no longer exist.

The singers of "El Boulicia Kleb" were eventually charged and tried for the "insulting" lyrics. The first trial took place in June 2013, resulting in jail sentences of two years which were later reduced to six months and suspended. On August 30, 2013, a second trial sentenced the two singers, who were missing at the first one because they had not received the summons, to 21 months in jail. On September 5, 2013, in a report entitled "Tunisia: Rappers Sentenced to Prison String of Prosecutions for Artwork, Writing, Lyrics Deemed 'Insulting'" (Human Rights Watch 2013), Human Rights Watch wrote: "The sentences of a year and nine months in prison, which violate their right to free expression, are the latest in a string of similar prosecutions." Even the Prime Minister considered that there was no link between this "appeal to the hatred and to death of policemen" and freedom of expression. Weld El Kenz went into hiding, but reappeared for a further trial on December 5, 2013. He and the members of his group were charged with "harming" the police, "affecting good moral standards" and "causing injury to civil servants". In this trial, they were exonerated and cleared of the charges.

It is of importance that the police unions, created in the first post-revolution weeks, have become increasingly powerful in Tunisia. Constituting a huge net

of labour unions, thousands of police officers were, in consequence, more able to organize protests against the officials of their supervisory minister. On October 18, 2013, in an official burial ceremony for victims of "terrorist attacks perpetrated by Salafist armed groups", the President, the Prime Minister and the Head of the Constitutional Assembly were designated unwanted people and were urged to back off. The following week, five of the officials of one of the security unions presumed to have led this action were suspended from work. In response, the police unions organized strikes and sit-ins to air their social and professional demands. On several occasions they have said that they are 'against official anti-terrorism strategies' and that 'they have their own, which is the only efficient way to defeat terrorists'. Their lobbying was so efficient that they could be seen on TV talk shows and giving newspapers interviews to 'explain' their actions. Furthermore, they publish declarations and statements about the security situation in the country on their Facebook official page; in justification of these actions and discourses, they claim they "are in a very practical field", insinuating that they are the only ones who can have a say and therefore should control what is allowed to be said about security policies. In such an atmosphere, every critique is easily seen as an offense "against those who are effectively defending the nation".

In an interview I conducted with one of the members of a graffiti group named Ahl Elkehf, (The Inhabitants of the Cave, an allusion to The Seven Sleepers), told me that they consider themselves 'an underground' and 'oppositional' art group. Because of that, even after 2011, they used to apply their graffiti in the last minutes of darkness before daylight. Another graffiti group, Zwawla (Poor Men), experiences similar limitations to freedom of expression and subversion as rappers such as Weld El Kenz. Zwawla is composed of 20–24-year-old graphic arts students, some of whom are settled in the capital pursuing university studies while others remain in Gabes, the town whence the group originated. Like many others, Gabes is a southern industrial town rich with new youth sub-cultural expression. Zwawla's graffiti commonly consists of slogans such as, "keep away from the poor", "the people are fed up and…". In a newspaper interview, one of the graffiti artists, a young man, said that once when he was writing the latter phrase on a wall, he was apprehended by a police officer, but when he was in the police station, he was told, "Yes, that is the truth. You can go and finish your graffiti." This is likely to be an exception, however. During December 2012 and January 2013, Zwawla group members were prosecuted after they were arrested by police officers when painting because "their ravages" caused harm to "private property". This took place in the early hours of the morning, when the two young men thought that they were safe under the protection of darkness. After a series of trials, rather than going to

jail they were sentenced to pay a fine of about 70 US dollars. Support for them was expressed all around the country. Students, school pupils and young people in general committed to the new art expression and became its animators, painting their messages on the walls of bigger and smaller towns, and on the 'electronic walls' of Facebook and other social networking sites.

The trials and their aftermath were a crucial moment in the process of shaping young subversive identity, as analysed by Božilović (2010) and Dagnaud (2011). However, as with young post-revolutionary Tunisian artists, democratizing artistic creation and diffusion was not an actual goal. The transformation in the conditions of art production and reception took place from below, with political authorities facing these new manifestations of youth rebellion using the police control methods of show scenes and trials. The challenge was to have the right to protest, to say that "enough is enough", "the world is witnessing a very deep crisis" and "we need a new world and we deserve it" as in the song by Hamzaoui and Kafon. This new generation was struggling for new spaces to express their views on their own terms.

The selected empirical examples discussed here show that the first goal of young people experimenting with artistic expression was to enlarge their audience, to make it ever wider, especially among young people. To achieve such a goal they had to reformulate the rules of social management of youthful expectation (Borup et al. 2006; Bickel 2003). Yet the side effect of broadening their audiences was to enlarge the boundaries of the art field through disturbing its functioning rules. This has a lot to do with the rights of expression enshrined in official policies and even more with the equilibrium within the art field itself.

Clashes

Access to the means of disseminating art products is a crucial issue of democratization. For new Tunisian artists, social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube currently supply the most preferred modes of distributing and consuming both rap music and graffiti images although graffiti artists also choose town walls close to train stations, the walls of secondary schools, colleges and faculties and viaduct pillars. These means of making young and angry art available challenge old rules of ranking popular and mass arts. In the light of the works of Di Maggio (1987), one can say that this is an aspect of the mobility of artworks.

The reactions of the older musical leadership were illustrative of its rejection of this reconstruction of the field. On December 2, 2012, the Vice General Secretary of the National Union of Tunisian Professional Singers, a trade union

affiliated to the Tunisian General Confederation of Labour (CGTT), announced that he was resolutely against those who are "trying to denigrate their master and to bring strange behaviour and values to the musical arena". This was the tone of his discourse on an Attounissia TV talk show entitled "People Talk" and on several occasions after that on the radio and in newspapers. Bendir Man, one of the targeted new musicians, produced a song to respond to "the accusations". The title of the satirical song cites the name of the Vice General Secretary, and the lyrics strongly belittle him Bendirman (2014).

The main objection of older generations of musicians is that those "boys" have not had any training and are, musically speaking, ignorant. On a TV program (March 26, 2014), a young rapper is insulted by an older female singer who denigrates his song, "Houmani" ("Quarterly": as in, what should be done in our quarter), saying that she cannot listen to it in the morning. He responds that she is "fake" (using the English word). In the same program, his friend and co-singer, on being asked about the opinions of their song's detractors says that, in spite of his respect for the older singers, he challenges them to do what he has done (Hamzaoui 2013). He is referring to the fact that the song he and his friend produced and posted on YouTube has been watched and listened to by eight million people within a time span of little more than six months, harvesting on average more than 4,400 views per day: a precedent in the history of Tunisian music. Clearly, one can claim that a 'new' popular music has been born (Bennett, 2008), while the emergence of new genres of political rap in Tunisia has meanwhile created new forms of intergenerational tensions. From a different angle, at stake are also new controversies over artistic taste, over what is considered good and/or appropriate music (Greenblatt 2009).

Yet these controversial young rappers had overlooked that their claims for freedom of expression in the practice of "their" art are also applicable to others in other artistic areas. Now movie and theatre actors are also engaging in rap singing and when three of these newcomers to the scene had some success, they were considered 'intruders' by established rappers. Formulating the rules of the game and the positions of each artist is one of the controversies within the field of rap production and distribution, and also one side of the process of democratization and reshaping the artistic field as a whole. Hence, one can say that in post-revolutionary Tunisia social contradictions are reflected in the realm of the arts, in opposing and controversial social categorizations and in the applications of art (Bourdieu 1979). In this sense, the transformations in the arts are to be understood as an aspect of profound social change. Yet the new situation is far from being stabilized. The rap controversy is placing young artists in opposition to older ones on the one hand, and young singers from different orientations on the other. The very existence of a considerable audience

for all parties shows that the spectators, even when they seem similar, do not have a unified vision or unified taste (Buckingham 2008). Indeed, they are increasingly eclectic and hybrid, an aspect of the label of "cultural chameleons" which Daenekindt (2013) has applied to them.

One cannot speak about one youth community of taste but of several such communities and it is also clear that conditions of art production and consumption are less and less a product of a single 'focal centre' of control that can dictate the rules of the game. Politically speaking, production is less likely to be controlled by a government weakened by the political turbulence the country has witnessed since the end of Ben Ali's presidency on January 14, 2011. Financially speaking, the process of art production and reception has increasingly left the hands of the professional studios, the companies and the old guard who once held prominent positions in the field. As noted above, the song "Houmani" had been seen by more than eight million people in the six months after its launching, a massive number for a Tunisian artist whose country has 10 million inhabitants. Yet the cost of making the clip did not exceed 250 Tunisian Dinars (130 USD). Young singers' work no longer needs huge investment to bring it to the public as ICT networks create shortcuts across the old circuits of diffusion of artwork with new rap and graffiti products, gradually forming specific communities based on their consumption. Even though these are only virtually connected groups of people, one can consider them communities whose unity is based on shared artistic taste. In the Tunisian case, cultural changes are being introduced to public life by the younger generations yet the massive youth participation in the revolution did not bring substantive changes to their lives, despite their being in a majority, especially at the social level.

A Social Narration of Inequalities?

The meetings of the National Dialogue, held in late January 2014, brought to the round table some 12 parties, from the so-called Religious Right to the leftist Popular Front. The four strongest civil society associations – the Tunisian Workers General Union (UGTT), the Tunisian Industry and Trade Union (UTICA), the Tunisian Human Rights League, and the Bar Association – were involved in the dialogue. It seems that the Mahdi Jomaa government was engaged in a political process which was bringing neoliberal technocrats to power. A wide range of young people saw themselves as betrayed by the parties and by the strong civil society associations. The Religious Right former opposition party, Ennahdha, is one of the strongest parties yet is increasingly seen as a recycling mechanism seeking to resuscitate the dominance of the former ruling Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique Party in official

political life. The subsequent governments are becoming less tolerant of all protest, whether social, political or cultural. Yet the widespread disappointment has enhanced youthful manifestations of anger and rejection in every field of expression. The distressed situation of teenage pupils, students and unemployed college and university graduates, especially in poor and lower-middle-class neighbourhoods and small and medium-sized towns, requires creative, innovative response. The disillusionment of young people, coupled with their aspirations, fears, hopes and other mixed feelings (Bickel 2003) are producing innovative and subversive imaginaries that could shape a new vision of the world inspired by youth – and inspiring them in turn (Kirmse 2010).

In a radio interview, one of the two rappers, Med Amine Hamzaoui, who sang the song mentioned above, said that his musician friend Ahmed Laabidi, alias Kafon, recorded his 'part', the first section, and several weeks later it was up to him to finish the job. Meanwhile, Kafon was sentenced to prison for a year for drug consumption, though released some nine months later under the regime of 'conditional freedom'. A civil society association initiative named Prisoner 52 had addressed an open letter to the Prime Minister seeking the reduction of the sentence for drug consumption as it is determined in the 1992 law amendment number 52. Some half an hour after midnight on March 19, 2014, the neighbourhood of the released prisoner was in a state of euphoria with dozens of young people singing the first quartets of the henceforth well-known rap piece. In May 2014, a new episode of tracking protesters took place. A highly subversive blogger, Azizi Amami, was also arrested for drug consumption. A large youth campaign of solidarity succeeded in forcing the judge to release him due to 'procedural non-conformity', yet this could also be seen as an official tactic to prevent potential 'snowball effects' of youthful protest. Amami's supporters are the same leagues, associations, groups and other revolutionary and subversive youth networks that supported the families of the martyrs of the revolution, young rap singers and young graffitists. They seem to respond by deliberate politicization of the cases, as if they were looking for a fight, and are generally activists seeking to hold on to the revolutionary struggle after being disappointed by political parties including those from the left wing. From this perspective, one can observe a detailed sociology of the disappointed expectations of activist youth (Bickel 2003).

Conclusion

Since 2011, subversive youth cultures have continued to promote new practices in the field of art production and diffusion in Tunisia. Many Tunisians, young people especially, hold the view that the original goals, aspirations and

promises of the Tunisian revolution have not been fulfilled. Young musicians and rap artists have played crucial roles in introducing new genres of political dissent, expressing anger and frustration about the political situation in the country. Five years on, the social context is increasingly gloomy. The 'controlled depreciation' of the official currency, although supported by the central bank, the resulting inflation are making life more difficult for ordinary people. Even what are largely considered the most valuable achievements of the revolution, that is, freedom and liberty, are threatened. The 'National Consensus' turned out to be a conciliation between two right wing parties, the Islamist Ennahdha and the recycled former ruling elite Nidaa Tounes.

Young art producers, in protesting against the ancient game within the art field, have demonstrated that they are likely to feel the gloominess of the situation and to be wary of it to a greater degree than any other layer of the population. Seeking new spaces for expressing their views, feelings and attitudes, they also come to seek a new world. Aiming to make art production cheaper, easier and less professionally monopolized, they are making rap songs and graffiti more accessible to a greater number of young people. By causing art diffusion to become wider, deeper and less geographically and socially monopolized, the conditions of art reception are becoming less elitist and more popular. These are certainly aspects of a painful democratization of art production and consumption.

The new means of expression, closely connected to innovation in ICTs, were the preferred weapons of these young art producers in reaching their goals of enhanced visibility. Consequently, the tone of their rap and graffiti can also be seen as an indication, a thermometer of the popular sentiments simmering in post-Ben Ali Tunisia. Even though the democratization of art production was no more than an unintended consequence of youthful involvement in the art world, it has permitted young people to voice a subversive vision of the world that claims that the crisis of the society is a structural one, requiring radical changes.

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PART 2

Entitlement

∵

The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Urban Burkina Faso

Jesper Bjarnesen

Introduction

The Ivorian civil war carried significant political and economic consequences for the whole West African subregion for most of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Burkina Faso has historically provided a significant proportion of the labour force for Côte d'Ivoire's plantation economy and Burkinabe labour migrants and their descendants in Côte d'Ivoire were at the heart of the political crisis that lead to armed conflict, causing more than 500.000 Burkinabe migrants to leave Côte d'Ivoire because of persecution (McGovern 2011). For second-generation immigrants to Côte d'Ivoire, the political rhetoric of "sending the strangers home" rang as false as it does in many other contexts around the world, including northern Europe's increasing hostility towards immigrants and their children. Forced to leave Côte d'Ivoire because of violent persecution, the children of labour migrants of Burkinabe descent arrived to their parents' country of origin only to encounter a new set of exclusionary discourses, labelling them as 'Ivorian'; as being betwixt and between categories of national belonging; or, simply, as "Diaspo".

In response to such hostility from their new neighbours in Burkina Faso, young migrants employed a range of strategies to cope with their social exclusion. For example, the involvement of young migrants in the 2010 presidential elections testifies to the resourcefulness and effectiveness of youths in negotiating the politics of inclusion and exclusion. This chapter analyses some of these strategies and argues, firstly, that the mobilization of a collective response to the social exclusion of young migrants in Bobo-Dioulasso was premised on that very exclusion as a source of identity among migrants – who gradually came to perceive of themselves as a collective. Secondly, that this mobilization of "Diaspo" identity served to simultaneously provide young migrants with a sense of purpose and belonging, and to transform a diverse group of young self-settled refugees into a socio-political force to be reckoned with in Bobo-Dioulasso. Thirdly, that "Diaspo" youth identity was gradually transformed from a social

stigma into a symbol of cosmopolitanism that leant itself perfectly to the local and national political elites, eager to replicate global images of participatory democracy and youth participation. Finally, the chapter argues that the politics of inclusion and exclusion more generally may be understood as fundamental to dynamics of identity formation, in which young adults are particularly liable to be both the targets of stigmatization and the principal actors in articulating counter discourses and mobilizing against their social exclusion.

The concept of the politics of inclusion and exclusion is thereby evoked to characterize the paradoxical social dynamics by which exclusionary practices against a social category also imply the reproduction and partial inclusion of that category into the social fabric; a 'complex dialectic of inclusion and exclusion' (Hage 1998, 135). In the case of the Diaspos in Bobo-Dioulasso, this conceptualization is illustrated both in the ways in which the derogatory category of Diaspo provided migrant youths with a recognisable social brand (Bjarnesen 2014), and at the same time enabled their collective mobilization *as* Diaspo; a social role that was ascribed to them for the purposes of social exclusion but came to serve as a significant source of self-identification and sense of worth.

The chapter is based primarily on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Bobo-Dioulasso during January-December 2010, which combined formal interviews, focus groups, and extended participant observation to study the informal dynamics of integration and exclusion of involuntary return migrants from Côte d'Ivoire.

Becoming Diaspo in Bobo-Dioulasso

In Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso's second-largest city, young adult refugees from Côte d'Ivoire were received with marked ambivalence from both local authorities and their new neighbours. On the one hand, labour migration from Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire has been a key livelihood option as well as a socio-cultural rite of passage for successive generations of Burkinabe men and (increasingly) women since the colonial period (Cordell, Gregory and Piché 1996; Zongo 2010b). In this sense, second-generation immigrants to Côte d'Ivoire were seen as representatives of the dreams of many young aspiring migrants in Burkina Faso and their "Ivorian" dialect, dress, and behaviour were seen as expressions of the cosmopolitan modernity associated with Côte d'Ivoire in general and its financial centre, Abidjan, in particular (Bjarnesen 2014). On the other hand, however, the competition over livelihood and living space in the city prompted considerable resentment towards the influx of large numbers of

self-settled refugees from the Ivorian civil war (Bjarnesen 2015). In this sense, the young migrants were taunted for being out-of-place: neither truly Ivorian, nor truly Burkinabe. These sentiments were at the heart of a social stigma that was ascribed to the new arrivals to the city: "Diaspo".

The term Diaspo was originally applied to a particular group of university students in Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, in the 1980s. Burkinabe labour migrants in Côte d'Ivoire often chose to send their children back to Burkina Faso to pursue higher education due to the instable political situation in Côte d'Ivoire which led to continuous strikes at the university and "blank years" when students at Ivorian universities were unable to complete their exams (Zongo 2010a). These university students became known as "the children of the Burkinabe diaspora in Côte d'Ivoire" or, in short, the "Diaspos". In the context of the Ivorian civil war, the term "Diaspo" took on a different meaning, as larger groups of young adult children of Burkinabe labour migrants in Côte d'Ivoire arrived in their parents' country of origin, often for the first time. These youths were a much more heterogeneous group but were nevertheless ascribed with the combination of privilege and arrogance that had been associated with the "Ivorian" university students in Ouagadougou a generation earlier.

The story of Djibril's arrival in Bobo-Dioulasso and his experiences of facing and coping with social exclusion are illustrative of how one might come to perceive oneself as Diaspo. Born in Côte d'Ivoire's south-western cocoa-producing region, he went to school in the town of San Pedro until the tensions between migrant workers and Ivorian land owners prompted his parents to consider a new life in Burkina Faso. After the Tabou massacres in 1999, in which more than 100 Burkinabe plantation workers were killed (Le Pape and Vidal 2002), Djibril's parents became increasingly aware of the threat they were facing as Burkinabe immigrants in Côte d'Ivoire. In early 2002 they sent Djibril, then sixteen years old, to live with an uncle to continue his studies in Bobo-Dioulasso. Djibril had been too young to understand the hostilities taking place in Côte d'Ivoire, he said, but he still remembered the day he realized that he was not Ivorian like his friends:

> I remember … the first time I understood that I was not Ivorian
> JB: Aha?
> Yes, because we were in Côte d'Ivoire, we walked with … well, that is with "the Ivorians", as if I knew that they were "Ivorians", me [I didn't know]. We walked together, we did everything together, having fun. One day in the sixth grade [*CM2*] the teacher decided to have the strangers stand up
> JB: They stand up in class … Aha.

That they stand up in class, exactly, because it was as if he wanted … to count the number of strangers that were in the class. Well, me I was still seated because I didn't even know where my parents came from – in the sixth grade, eh! – I didn't even know where he is going with that question. I was still seated. He took the sheet, he says, "but Ouattara, get up!" Well, I stood up. It was when I came home, I say "but what is all that about?" They explained it to me. They said … that's when they began to make me understand that me, my country, it's Burkina Faso.

Djibril felt naïve that he had not understood his origins sooner and realized that he was different from his classmates. In a scene that could have been taken from a story set in the Germany of the 1930s or Rwanda in the early 1990s, his teacher was the first to let him know that his family name gave his origins away and that he was a stranger in Côte d'Ivoire. This would have been in 1997–98, at a time when Henri Konan Bédié was President of the Republic and had introduced his concept of *ivoirité* into the national political debate which drew new boundaries of Ivorian citizenship based on the elusive idea of autochthony (Dunn 2009; Geschiere 2009; Dembélé 2002). A few years later, Djibril left Côte d'Ivoire with his older brother who was already studying medicine at the university in Bobo-Dioulasso. Djibril initially lived under the patronage of his paternal uncle until the arrival of his father, in 2005, and during that time he had continued his studies until the ninth grade but he had failed his final exams and been unable to acquire a diploma. He dropped out of school in 2007. Since then he had struggled to find work, in his own opinion largely due to the stigmatization he faced, having grown up in Côte d'Ivoire:

I can say that in that sense even, there were … big persons … big persons, you could say the authorities here even, who … really … who didn't like us, eh.
JB: Really?
Yes, when you go like that to establish … for the establishment of your [ID] paper, a paper like that, "Ah it's another Ivorian, there", that, "it's you, you've come to wreck our country!" In fact, they, to them, we have come to wreck their country, but that's not it. There were even protests where they managed to … the President [Compaoré] – excuse me – himself he went out and said that if today the country is going astray, it's because of the arrival of these youths from Côte d'Ivoire!

Djibril believed that it was this kind of prejudice against migrants arriving from Côte d'Ivoire that had prevented him from finding work. Another

underlying difficulty would obviously be the lack of personal connections in the city, or elsewhere in Burkina Faso, which was a disadvantage in a society where much recruitment into both the public sector and other jobs seemed to rely heavily on knowing someone in an advantageous position. Similar experiences were expressed by other young people who had come to Burkina Faso for the first time in their youth. Their clothes, linguistic styles, and mannerisms that were associated with Côte d'Ivoire in general, and *abidjanais* youth culture in particular, made these young men and women stand out – something that made it easier to make both friends and enemies in the neighbourhood.

Fighting for Integration

Djibril, perhaps, emphasized discursive persecution over his lack of personal connections because he had been involved with several attempts to mobilize young "Ivorians" against their stigmatization in order to negotiate access to formal employment as a disadvantaged minority. He was currently involved in a new association, after the previous group disintegrated when its president was named president of the national youth council at the provincial level. The new association was called *"Diaspora et développement"*, Diaspora and Development, referring to the most persistent label that Djibril and his friends had been given in Burkina:

> They call us "the Diaspo". Well, the expression is badly chosen, since a Diaspo is someone who lives in Côte d'Ivoire … it's a Burkinabe who lives in Côte d'Ivoire who is the Diaspo, you know, "the diaspora". There. But us, we are not Diaspos.

Faced with the derogatory term Diaspo, Djibril was not alone in remarking that the idea of 'diaspora' was difficult to reconcile with his own situation, since he was now living in the country to which his citizenship was ascribed; Burkina Faso. But, as Zongo notes, the term's origins in the circles of university students in Ouagadougou suggest that the term "Diaspo" was coined as an abbreviation of 'children of or from the diaspora' (Zongo 2010a:35, my translation), referring to the above-mentioned tendency for Burkinabe migrants in Côte d'Ivoire of sending their children to Burkina Faso to continue their education. To Djibril, however, being labelled as Diaspo upon his arrival to the country that he had painfully learned, while in Côte d'Ivoire, was his true origin was not only unjust but also semantically nonsensical (Bjarnesen 2013).

The former president of the association was a friend of Djibril's and he had told Djibril that the only way to get a job was to mobilize collectively, *as* Diaspos, that is to use that label as a rallying point in order to reach local politicians and attempt to negotiate access to public employment. More generally, the association had become a vehicle for reinterpreting the term "Diaspo" by evoking, on the one hand, the initiative and resourcefulness of young people like Djibril and, on the other, to exploit the positive connotations of the Burkinabe diaspora *in* Côte d'Ivoire who, as Djibril was quick to emphasize, contributed significantly to the Burkinabe economy through remittances although that influence was rarely acknowledged.

So far, the organization was in its embryonic stage, with Djibril and fourteen other volunteers coordinating meetings and collecting membership fees and approximately three hundred paying members across the city but to Djibril it was one among several ways of trying to turn his labelling into an advantage. I asked him why he was so committed to the idea of changing the connotation of the word "Diaspo":

> I fight to integrate myself, that is to say, I … integrate by force. Right. I integrate by force because I acknowledge now that "home", it's here. I have become aware, since I was young. I see that "home" is here.

Djibril explained that he had decided to show "the *autochtone*", as he put it, that he was more Burkinabe than "him" and to learn everything about his country to prove his commitment to Burkina Faso. He said that "*Diaspora et développement*" was based on the same idea: of showing their critics that they were a positive force in society, to be acknowledged as truly belonging: 'So, it will be another shot for us to show people here that we are truly [brief laugh] the sons of the country, you know'.

Djibril's experiences of being labelled as a stranger once more, having already left Côte d'Ivoire with the label "Burkinabe" ascribed to him, were shared by other Diaspos in Bobo-Dioulasso. Although the Burkinabe diaspora in Côte d'Ivoire has always been valued for its contribution to the Burkinabe economy through remittances and investments, the arrival of large numbers of displaced migrants during the Ivorian crisis changed the view that non-migrant Burkinabes held of the diaspora and brought veiled resentments out into public discourse. In this re-evaluation of the role of the Burkinabe diaspora in Côte d'Ivoire, the Diaspo youths were seen as the personification of the problem – of Burkinabe migrants who had abandoned their Burkinabe origins and integrated into Ivorian society, to the extent that their speech, dress, behaviour, and social values were seen as alienated and inappropriate by non-migrant Burkinabes.

Performing Subservient Youth

Dramane, Djibril, and Youssouf were close friends. They would usually hang out in front of the house of another Diaspo friend, Cristophe, under the shade of a mango tree in the corner of a small quadratic open space in the neighbourhood of Sarfalao. One Sunday afternoon, as Djibril was taking his chance against the undefeated scrabble champion of the day and Dramane was practicing lyrics for an upcoming musical performance with Youssouf, the drowsy atmosphere was interrupted when a large white car, known locally as "*quatre-quatre*", referring to the "4x4" four wheel drive mark on the side of such vehicles, pulled up in front of the mango tree.

A youthful looking man in his early fifties emerged and greeted the young men, who dutifully shook hands and sat up from their cosy positions. His driver also greeted us while his boss proceeded to inspect the open space in front of us, which was being cleared for shrubs at the end of the rainy season. He was involved in a resident initiative to improve the roads and rain dikes of that part of the neighbourhood and had come to meet with Cristophe's uncle, the owner of the courtyard that served as a Diaspo meeting point. After his casual inspection, the man from the car returned to our circle and asked if tea was ready. Youssouf, who had been chatting lazily about the shrub-clearing issue with the others changed his voice and posture in a blink, from the confident, talkative, and smiling way I had come to know into a shrugging, subdued, and humble demeanour that made him almost unrecognizable. He politely replied that the tea was not ready yet. The man with the car was smiling and unimposing in his attitude, which made the contrast with Youssouf's servility all the more striking. Some "big men" (Utas 2012) I met in Bobo-Dioulasso would take on a very imposing attitude towards young men, but this man's authority shone through his jovial manner, reinforced by the reactions of the youths. The man gave Youssouf 1,000 fCFA and said that he had hoped that a contribution would have earned him a taste but Youssouf repeated that he was sorry to say that he might have to wait a while. The man then asked whether Youssouf was a Diaspo. Youssouf confirmed that he was born and raised in Côte d'Ivoire. The man replied that he could tell from his demeanour that Youssouf was a Diaspo – his appearance, his speech.

The second the man turned around, Youssouf's attitude changed, and he told me, "Let's go!" which I thought meant that he wanted us to follow the man towards his car. The others laughed and I understood his joke that he and I should make off with the cash. What I found remarkable about this episode, and the countless similar ones I have witnessed, was how the role of subservient junior to the authoritative (however understated in this particular instance) senior was, first of all, assumed and dropped in the blink of an eye

and, secondly, how unremarkable this spectacle was to the group of youths who were witnessing the transformations with me.

As numerous studies of African youth have showed in the past ten years (e.g. Abbink and van Kessel 2005; Abdullah 1998; Argenti 2006; Bucholtz 2002; Cruise O'Brien 1996; Durham 2000; Vigh 2006b), the hierarchical position of junior in relation to someone senior epitomizes the notion of youth but this structural relationship does not determine how these roles are played, or used, by individual actors. In this trivial episode, Youssouf embraced the role of a subservient youth, thereby providing the group with a little extra money for tea and, potentially, a positive relationship with a member of a local social network that might be nurtured into a more binding alliance. This choice, and shifting, of roles reflecting different aspects of youth should not be seen simply as fake or manipulative charades. In Goffman's influential terminology, a social performance may be understood as the individual's effort to fit into an already established social role or category. Performativity may tend to be misunderstood analytically as a more artificial, or insincere, form of social practice, but to Goffman, seeing social practice as a social performance does not concern, conceptually, the sincerity of the performer but rather the premise that '[i]f a performance is to come off, the witnesses by and large must be able to believe that the performers are sincere. This is the structural place of sincerity in the drama of events' (Goffman 1959:77; see also Argenti 2007:11). Sasha Newell's analysis of 'the modernity bluff' in Abidjan also points out that the performance of established social roles, even when performed with an exaggerated theatricality, tends to reinforce 'ideas of authenticity and essence rather than destabilizing them' (Newell 2012:140), which makes the question of the performer's sincerity less important than the reproductive effects of the performance itself. This last point is important for understanding the structural implications of the collective mobilization of Diaspo youths, as I will argue in this chapter's conclusion.

Cheering for a Living

On a Sunday in August in 2010, Dramane and his friends were summoned to take part in the inaugural ceremony of the newly appointed President of the Regional Youth Council of Hauts-Bassins; the former president of *Diaspora et developpement* who had used his position to gain access to the city's governing party (CDP) representatives. Dramane circulated the message to the group and their tag-along ethnographer on Saturday evening and the following day, we met under the mango tree at Cristophe's place as instructed. We were all

given a t-shirt in red, green, or yellow with the print 'Regional Youth Council of Hauts-Bassins. A Structure in the Service of the Youth', to wear during the ceremony.

We met the others in front of the imposing Catholic church in one of the city's upper class neighbourhood, in front of which a row of shiny land cruisers were parked. Inside the imperious meeting hall of the church, an assembly similar to the one unfolding was being displayed on film on a large screen to the right of a podium with a line of tables with name cards and small bottles of water. We waited outside in our colourful t-shirts and when someone passed us going to or leaving the meeting hall, one of the Diaspos would imitate the person's walk or make faces behind their back to the applause of the others. A tall man in a dark suit, who I learned was the President of the National Youth Council, came over and shook hands with Dramane, whom he knew by name and seemed to like. Dramane made a few jokes about his fancy suit, speaking with plenty of Ivorian *nouchi* slang and attitude but slightly more polite than he would to the rest of us "youths". At 33 I was probably among the oldest in the group but I would estimate the average to be around 27 in our "youth group". But on this occasion, despite their age, the Diaspo youths played their part well. When the inauguration ceremony began, we were placed at the back wall of the meeting hall and given a streamer with the same text as our t-shirts. In-between speeches, our group would sing celebratory songs to the speaker and we would lead the applause and cheering during and after each speech. The event's guest of honour was the Minister for Youth and Employment and other prominent guests included the Minister of Agriculture and the National Youth President that Dramane had met with before the ceremony.

During the first speech, Dramane and Youssouf whispered the lyrics to a song they had apparently improvised for the occasion to the rest of us. By the fourth interlude, the group had worked out the song quite well and after the final speech, the TV crew from RTB approached us through the centre aisle from the podium and the Diaspo youths were given a moment in the spotlight while the crowd applauded.

What this description shows is first of all how the role of supporters to the regional youth council provided an entrance into the sphere of regional and national politics that many unemployed youths would never dream of. Performing the role of youthful backing singers is obviously not an expressway to fame and fortune but, at least to Dramane in this description, the connections to important allies in the political elite were maintained through these events. A month later, Djibril and Dramane were selected as volunteers for the Ministry of Employment and Youth's regional office in Bobo-Dioulasso during the preparations of the celebration of Burkina Faso's 50th Anniversary

of national independence in December 2010 in competition with hundreds of other applicants, perhaps not exclusively by way of their performance at the inauguration but no doubt because of their ability to contribute to such events in a positive and appropriate manner.

Rather than being subdued youths, the role taken by the Diaspos at the inauguration was one that fit better with the pretentions of the Ministry and the Regional Youth Council where the youth represent the future of the nation, and an important segment of the electorate, and where the cheering and colourful group at the back of the meeting hall represents the promise of the youth of the entire region. The irony, of course, is that the vast majority of this particular group consisted of youths who had grown up in Côte d'Ivoire and who were struggling for recognition *vis-à-vis* their peers in the city. But the extrovert and jovial attitude of Dramane and his friends fit in perfectly with this event and Dramane's ability to play the role of the trickster by joking around with the National Youth President might have served him better than the subservient attitude that Youssouf displayed towards the "big man" under the mango tree. On our way home, Djibril explained that in the circles of the political elite it was no use to ask for help or try to be humble: these guys faced such behaviour from all the youths of their social networks on a daily basis and Djibril knew that it drove them crazy.

Performing youthfulness, even in your late twenties or early thirties, might be a way of combining the best of a more cosmopolitan idea about youth as the nation's future with the best of the persisting gerontocratic hierarchies where those youths most able to assert themselves gain access to higher positions within the structure while others remain stuck in youth as employment opportunities and access to higher education continue to recede (Mbembe 1985). In a context of high unemployment rates and restricted livelihood opportunities, mobilizing as Diaspos turned out to provide some youths with access to parts of the local and regional political elite though their ability to perform the role of vibrant and active youths, representing the spirit of the regional and national youth councils and the political slogans about the country's future. In this way, Diaspo youth culture served as a social asset that provided Diaspo youths with access to elite networks. Paradoxically, performing youth at political rallies showed a potential way out of the *social moratorium of youth* which, Henrik Vigh argues, characterizes the social position of youth in a context where persistent economic decline and 'generationally asymmetric control over access to resources … greatly reduce [young people's] space of possibilities' (Vigh 2006a:96). Performing Diaspo youth culture in the service of the local political elite, in other words, was a way for the Diaspos to negotiate access

to networks of privilege that might serve as a path away from the social position of youth, towards social adulthood (Barrett 2004).

Progression within and Despite Networks of Access

I once asked Patrice how he would describe the difference between himself and someone like Djibril. He asked me to elaborate and I said that on the one hand they were approximately the same age, they were both born and raised in Côte d'Ivoire and they were both called "Diaspo" in Bobo-Dioulasso. On the other hand, they spoke differently and behaved differently – Djibril confirming the Diaspo stereotype to a much larger extent, while Patrice was less outspoken and dressed more like his Burkinabe neighbours. Patrice said that the difference was that Djibril was always in the Diaspo "system": he always behaved as a Diaspo and hung out with other Diaspos. Patrice used to be more like that when he first arrived in Burkina Faso. He had used more *nouchi* vocabulary and dressed in fashionable clothes without caring what other people thought: 'The Diaspos don't care', he said repeatedly. Now Patrice lived in a part of the neighbourhood where many of his neighbours were Burkinabe. He had also aged, and matured, and was responsible for his girlfriend and their daughter. He could no longer be as carefree and he was more concerned with fitting in. Patrice's new priorities did not go unnoticed. In a focus group with six young Diaspo women, my question about what characterizes a Diaspo young man evolved into a longer discussion in which Patrice was taken as a counter point to 'typical Diaspo behaviour'. He was described by the focus group participants as responsible and mature, unlike many of his agemates who still behaved like young boys by trying to seduce girls just for the fun of it. To the Diaspo women in this discussion, being a Diaspo youth was fine for a certain time in your life but inappropriate for someone with children and more responsibility.

Patrice experienced the tension between his earlier and current priorities in his relationship with his best friend Julien these days. They were the same age, shared the same background, and were practically neighbours. But Julien acted much more as a Diaspo than him – he was always *in the system*. They would talk about that when they went out. Julien would even tell Patrice to slow down, saying that he could no longer be as Diaspo as the others, now that he had a wife and kid to tend to. There were other, slightly older, guys that Patrice knew in the neighbourhood who had changed in a similar way. Those were the people Patrice related to these days and wanted to emulate.

In this way, the desire to distance oneself from the youthful category of Diaspo may not only be related to a desire to climb the ladder in one particular form of hierarchy. Performing the role of subservient youth may follow someone until death, since that position is relational to a particular position as senior (Durham 2004). But the youthfulness of Djibril and his friends at the inauguration has a social due date. As parents, both men and women may feel the incentive to relate more to other social roles, as Patrice did to his more mature male neighbours. Being in your early thirties, in and of itself, says very little about the appropriateness of embracing the role of cheering for the elite in the hope of eventually joining them. More than age, other factors such as becoming a parent, a head of household, or being steadily employed may be much more forceful in marking the gradual transition towards a new social role (Johnson-Hanks 2002). For the Diaspos, such roles would, once again, have to be invented as they went along.

Conclusion

From its origins in the university circles in Ouagadougou in the late 1980s, the term Diaspo became associated with migrant families returning in the context of the Ivorian crisis, connoting the two-fold exclusion of young second-generation migrants who were neither Ivorian – given their parents' origins – nor Burkinabe, due to their upbringing in Côte d'Ivoire. The chapter considered two different expressions of the social performance of youth in this regard. On the one hand, political rallies and campaigns set the stage for the Diaspos to perform the role of an active and politically engaged national youth. But, on the other hand, in the practice of everyday life, the role of youth might rely more on cultural idioms of generational hierarchy. In these contexts, performing youth implied acting as subservient and respectful towards seniors – a performance that went counter to the general stereotype of the Diaspo as outspoken and arrogant.

In their navigation of the social position of youth, the Diaspos relied not only on global discourses of youth as the future of the nation but also on the very restrictiveness of local social hierarchies to which it might seem to stand in opposition. Put differently, the combination of a cultural platform that encouraged the performance of youth culture with a social hierarchy premised on seniority provided the Diaspos with a room for manoeuvre that would not otherwise have been available. This image of youth culture departs considerably from the Birmingham School's view of youth culture as resistance (Hall and Jefferson 1976), and later works on youth culture as a vibrant form

of self-expression and liberation from societal norms (Maira and Soep 2004; Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995) and emphasizes the interplay between social hierarchies and individual agency through which youth may be understood simultaneously as an expression of cultural identity and social positioning, of both being and becoming (Christiansen, Utas and Vigh 2006).

To the Diaspos, the threat of being stuck in the social moratorium of youth persisted but some youths were negotiating access to social progression through networks of privilege at the expense of others. Negotiating social adulthood in this way designates a socially *conservative* practice that inscribes the image of an active and cheering youth into established social hierarchies. This observation warns against an overly romantic view of youth agency as implying a revolutionary potential for social change. As Deborah Durham argues from her ethnography of Herero youth associations in Botswana:

> Youth is not a period of liberation from a home society or cultural traditions, and the motif of development that youth engenders is not a linear move away from the past or from home ... [T]heir agency, or their ability to shape the culture and social relations around them, rests more in their ability to vest [their innovations] in relationalities, which they are only beginning to wield effectively in their later youth years.
>
> DURHAM 2008, 176

While it may be tempting to inscribe the inconspicuous processes of assimilation that Patrice was engaged in, despite his Ivorian upbringing, as representing the more conservative path towards social maturity and pose the performance of Diaspo youth culture as a contrasting example of innovative and independent agents, challenging the established norms of appropriate behaviour, it may be more useful to appreciate both the resourcefulness and independent agency involved in the former, and the conservative ambitions of the latter. The social position of youth implies that young people direct their efforts towards expanding their social networks and accumulating social recognition by all possible means, leading some to evoke their youthfulness in a context where such a social role is perceived as an asset and others to emphasize their sense of responsibility and moderation to a different audience. The public performance of Diaspo youth culture, in this way, may be seen as one among several strategies in the pursuit of social recognition and access to networks of privilege.

This understanding of collective mobilization approaches political involvement as a form of recruitment, rather than an expression of ideological affiliation or social critique. As studies of combatant recruitment have convincingly

shown, participation in armed conflict may often be understood as a livelihood strategy or a quest for social mobility and worth (Bjarnesen 2016; Christensen and Utas 2008; Vigh 2006a). However, although the collective mobilization of Diaspo youths has been analysed as a socially conservative, or affirmative, livelihood strategy, the politics of exclusion and inclusion also warrant a critical attention to potential uses of such groups. In Burkina Faso, the reign of president Blaise Compaoré came to an abrupt end in late October 2014 and the ongoing restructuring of the national political elite will continue to have repercussions for the local networks that Djibril and his friends have been seeking to join. The Diaspos' service to the president during the 2010 electoral campaign had little to do with political ideology or allegiance and their future connections and recruitment as supporters to local elites will probably depend more on available opportunities than on allegiance to particular influential individuals or groups. This also means that in the case of a militarization of the political competition in Burkina Faso post-Compaoré, the step from cheering at rallies to participating in organized violence may be shorter than one might expect. In a context where social mobility to a large extent depends upon the exclusion of the majority of young people from access to the privileges of the few, youth is a social category that many people will do what it takes to escape.

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Hustling for Rights: Political Engagements with Sand in Northern Kenya

Nanna Jordt Jørgensen

> Hustling means, like... it's not only about money; you hustle even to get rights here in our area.
>
> Young man from Laikipia North, May 2014

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In the arid and semi-arid lands of Northern Kenya, young people are struggling to establish sustainable livelihood strategies in a context of prolonged and more frequent drought periods reducing pasture productivity, and a growing pressure on land due to new political and economic interests in the region (see, e.g., Fratkin 2013). Such altered livelihood strategies often constitute novel ways of relating to the environment, and sometimes catalyse altered forms of environmental agency. To people belonging to sedentary pastoralist communities in Laikipia North, one of the few possible livelihood options, apart from livestock rearing, is the harvesting and selling of sand from communally owned sand deposits in dry riverbeds. In this chapter I discuss how a group of young people trained as paralegals engage in negotiations regarding the management and use of sand. They call their way of operating 'hustling', signifying a political practice characterized by improvisation, drawing on eclectic forms of knowledge, doing things in a 'young' and 'urban' way, the bending of rules and the use of a multiplicity of tactics, the intertwinement of personal and communal interests and the constant negotiation of ambiguous positions of autonomy and dependency. Through an exploration of the empirical term 'hustling' and its use in relation to negotiations over sand management, I aim to shed light on young people's experiences and conceptualizations of their political agency with regard to the environment.

In Kenyan national discourse, young people's environmental agency and political participation is often phrased in negative terms. Young people in general are considered active participants in environmental degradation (e.g.,

Republic of Kenya 2007, 25), and young men from pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya are seen as initiators of environmental conflicts such as cattle raids and fights over pasture and water, and as actors who are easily manipulated into ethnic political violence.[1] Based on anthropological contributions to the study of the environment, politics and youth, I suggest a more nuanced way of exploring and understanding how young people engage politically with the environment and natural resources.

As a natural resource whose status and exploitation occupy the minds and time of a large group of young people in Laikipia North, sand provides an interesting window into young people's environmental agency. I approach sand with inspiration from newer anthropological contributions to the study of natural resources and materials which regard the properties of materials as processual and relational rather than "objectively determined" or "subjectively imagined" (Ingold 2011, 30; see also Richardson and Weszkalnys 2014). In Laikipia North, sand occupies an ambiguous position, sometimes dealt with as a natural resource or "commodified nature" (Richardson and Weszkalnys 2014, 10), sometimes as part of a wider natural and cultural landscape. This ambiguity releases a range of political negotiations of social relations touching upon gender, generation, community and state. My approach to politics is based on an anthropological tradition which focuses on politics "beyond the boundaries of the state" (Curtis and Spencer 2012, 173) and as situated in the practices of everyday life (see, e.g., de Certeau 1984; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Scott 2008). I approach everyday life politics from the viewpoint of phenomenologically inspired anthropology (e.g., Jackson 1996), thus attempting to capture how young people in a particular place and time period experience their political engagements. However, as suggested in Tsing's writings, local environmental struggles link up to trans-local and global ideas and practices (e.g., Tsing 2005, ix). With inspiration from Tsing's ideas on travelling knowledge, I suggest that the everyday life political practices of young people in Laikipia North involve drawing eclectically on global ideas and practices. Understanding how such ideas and practices are brought into use in relation to specific environmental issues requires attention to young people's contextual positioning. Contemporary African youth research points out that local understandings of a young person in Africa seldom refer to actual age, but to a person in a life stage where he or she possesses little or no power and authority, and is socially dependent on adults (see, e.g., Christiansen, Utas and Vigh 2006; de Boeck and Honwana 2005; Durham 2000; Vigh 2006). As opposed to, for instance, much policy discourse, which depicts young people as individuals with

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1 Personal communication with various government officers and NGO representatives, see also Greiner 2013.

rights or problems, the approach of these studies highlights the relational and contextual aspects of youth agency as situated within social relations, fluctuating positions and wider societal processes related to, for example, the economy and politics. The ambiguity of these relational positions shapes young people's agency and social navigations towards adulthood (see Christiansen, Utas and Vigh 2006; Vigh 2006).

The theoretical perspectives discussed above draw attention to the processual, relational and contextual aspects of environmental materials, everyday life politics and youth agency. I will bring these perspectives together in an exploration of the empirical term 'hustling' and the way young people use it in relation to their political engagements with sand.[2] The concept of hustling has travelled from black American ghettoes to African cities through hip hop culture (Di Nunzio 2012, 441), but the contact with a new context appears to have changed the meaning of the term slightly. In Kenya, hustling is used quite widely for non-formal livelihood strategies, not necessarily based on cheating, manipulation or other shady activities characterizing American ghetto-hustling (e.g., Venkatesh 2002; Wacquant 1998). Hustling as economic practice is a manifest concept in Kenyan popular culture. For instance, a well-known Kenyan musician, Royweed Di Xtasy, sings about hustling, and even William Ruto, the current vice president, described himself as a hustler during the 2013 election campaign. The practice of hustling as an economic strategy has been explored in recent studies of the economic navigations of urban youth in Africa (e.g., Di Nunzio 2012; Munive 2010; Thieme 2013). According to Thieme, among self-employed entrepreneurs within the informal waste management sector in the Nairobi slums, hustling signifies short-term or "last resort" survival mechanisms, as well as more long-term livelihood strategies. However, Thieme also notes that hustling is related to the contestations of different structures of authority, including generational (Thieme 2013, 390).

My empirical material from Laikipia North suggests that in Kenya the concept of hustling has travelled from urban areas and city culture into the small town centres in rural areas and out of the economic realm. Young people in Laikipia North have adopted the term hustling so as to be able to express, first and foremost, the experience of becoming something other than a herder: someone who has to survive without livestock or formal employment through improvisation, navigating obstacles and making the most of any available opportunities for gaining a bit of income (Jørgensen 2015; see

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2   Young people usually make use of the English word hustling, even when speaking Swahili, but in these situations conjugating the verb according to the Swahili language structure (e.g. *tunahustle* – we are hustling).

also Thieme 2013, 391). Still, for the young people discussed in this chapter, it also makes sense to use the term to refer to a way of moving and operating which is conceptualized as political more than economical. I suggest that this idea of political hustling illuminates central aspects of young people's political engagements with the environment.

The analysis presented here is based on empirical material gathered during six months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2012 and 2014 in the Kenyan Laikipia North sub-county. Discussion draws in particular on interviews with young people who have participated in paralegal NGO training (see further description below), and observations of their actions in community activities. Additional sources include interviews with NGO representatives and government officials, policy documents, media clippings and discussions on social media. In the following sections, I first provide a brief contextual background of young people's involvement in sand mining in Laikipia North. Subsequently, I unpack hustling as political practice by exploring what kinds of social and environmental arrangements young people address and hope to change when they hustle for their rights, and what characterizes the way they do this. Lastly, I propose that attention to hustling illuminates how locally situated political engagements with the environment draw on various trans-local ideas and practices.

Sand and Youth in Laikipia North

In Laikipia North, due to the special history of colonial land expropriation, and to complex and competing contemporary land usages, livelihood transitions are more advanced than in other parts of the northern Kenyan region (Letai and Lind 2013). Increasing demand for sand (a main component in concrete, filler and in the foundation of roads) in the Kenyan construction industry has made the sale of the resource quite a lucrative business, and in 2014 local observers suggested that at least 1,000 tons of sand were ferried out of Laikipia North every day to city centres in the vicinity.[3] Sand is harvested in permanently or temporarily dry riverbeds situated on group ranch land.[4] The hard work of

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3 Personal communication with various government officials and people in Laikipia North with knowledge of the sand trade (May 2014).

4 Group ranches were introduced in Kenya as part of the post-independence land adjudication process with the Land (Group representative) Act in 1968. The group ranch system enables a group of people to hold the title of a piece of land.

loading the sand onto big old lorries is carried out by young men organized in groups. Some young people engage with sand as brokers, mediating between people with sand deposits on their private land and sand buyers, while others are involved in discussions and negotiations regarding how the sand exploitation is managed on communal land and the profit distributed. According to community agreements and guidelines from the National Environment Management Authority (National Environment Management Authority 2007), the funds generated by sand should primarily be used for local "development projects", and in particular to pay school fees for secondary school students. Nevertheless, according to many, the trade is marred by corruption at all levels.

The status of sand in Laikipia North is ambiguous and indefinite. Some of my interlocutors, in particular elders, argued that sand is part of the land (*enkop* in Maa), and that selling it is against tradition and destroys pastures, thereby threatening pastoral livelihoods. This view in some cases led to the perception (shared by both old and young) that the sale of sand was cursed, and that the business therefore affected community relations and individual lives negatively. Others, and in particular young people with school education, talked about sand as a resource and likened it to gold or cash crops. As a resource, sand offered them a way to earn their daily bread and the community possibilities for supporting education as well as connecting with other, more 'developed' parts of Kenya, but its exploitation also resulted in environmental problems such as erosion and reduced availability of water in the area. Sand has only relatively recently been recognized as a resource in this area, and its ownership and user rights are therefore more uncertain than, for instance, in the case of pasture and livestock (although access to these resources may also be disputed). The contested nature and ambiguous status of sand positions it in the centre of a variety of social negotiations about influence, access to resources and visions of the future.

The young people I observed engaging in such negotiations were primarily secondary school graduates, some with further education, who had received paralegal training from NGOs. According to my informants, the first paralegal training in Laikipia North was offered by the local NGO Osiligi in the 1990s but has since been carried out by a number of different organizations. Among other topics, the paralegal training programmes introduce young people to human rights (in particular the rights of women and children), the content of the new Kenyan constitution (Government of Kenya 2010), and advocacy and conflict management methods. The young men and women trained as paralegals used the training in many different ways during the course of their everyday lives: discussing and reporting abuses of children's rights, sharing their knowledge

with other people in informal ways, negotiating their positions within the family or community or when taking part in community meetings. While some of the young paralegals I met during fieldwork had short-term employment contracts with NGOs, most of them did not have long-term jobs. When talking about their livelihoods, they said they were hustling: "running up and down", earning a little cash here and there. Often rushing up and down the main street in Dol Dol on their way to some kind of meeting or workshop, the paralegals stood out from those of their age mates without school education. The Western clothes and plastic sandals of male paralegals thus constituted a quite marked difference to the clothing of the *moran*, the young men (or 'warriors') herding cattle who wore the characteristic red blankets (*shuka*) and beadwork. Female paralegals also wore Western clothes, sometimes with the addition of a decorative kanga (a cotton cloth with printed proverbs and designs worn by women in East Africa), and had their hair done – *relaxed* (straightened), extended, braided, but seldom just close-cropped like many other women in the area. These clothing practices illustrate that the paralegals considered themselves different, more 'modern', than people in the community without secondary schooling. Still, they did not see this modern status as being in opposition to the 'Maasai culture' in which they took pride.

While many other young people in the community gained their daily bread from the sand, the paralegals were mainly involved in negotiations regarding the management of the resource and the profit generated by selling it, primarily seeing their role as making sure that things were done in the 'right' way. As one of them told me: "When the paralegals come in, there is development. They are the right defenders. Where there is no transparency, they will shift in." The actions of the paralegals often sought to bring about some kind of social change or to negotiate social relations evolving around the practice of extracting and selling sand. This could be in relation to gendered and generational community hierarchies, intra-community power relations or the practices of state representatives. Several of the paralegals referred to these political activities as 'hustling', or "hustling for your rights", as one of them put it. In the following I will explore three forms of political hustling in the context of sand harvesting.

Hustling for Voice in Gendered and Generational Hierarchies

We have a problem with the group ranch management, because of these *wazee* [elders]. He [the chairman] is 89 years; it's a man from

independence.[5] They have overstayed... Now it's digital![6] There is a generational war. ... This generational war is between the youth and the *wazee* .... Their [the elders'] understanding is local. If you compare their thinking capacity with ours, it is now different. The way it was the previous years, now everything has changed, mentally, the environment ... So they must accept, *ni vijana tu* [it is just the youth]. But they don't want [to]. You cannot talk with them, they will say "you lack respect, I will curse you". If you are with the youth, you can say that they are taking us backwards, but with the *wazee* you can't because it is like your father, even your grandfather. The gap is very wide.

Paralegal from Laikipia North, 8/5/2014

In generational negotiations, sometimes described as the 'generational war' as in the quote above, sand was often at the centre of the debate. In Ntim group ranch,[7] the group ranch chairman had been in the seat for many years, and most young people who had gone to school blamed him and the other elders on the group ranch committee for a lack of understanding of contemporary conditions and for holding back development. In informal discussions without the presence of elders, the paralegals criticized the old men for not being able to manage the resources generated from the sale of sand effectively, and challenged the idea that the exploitation of sand was cursed. Sand should be seen as a natural resource, these young people insisted in such discussions, referring to school knowledge about resources and wealth creation (taught in social studies in primary school and geography in secondary school, see Jørgensen 2016), stressing that the benefits of the resource should be distributed 'fairly' within the community. Young female paralegals disputed the fact that decision-making on sand management was a male domain as sand harvesting provided money for children's education (a key concern of women) and had an impact on the availability of water in the dry season and thereby on the workload of women. "We were trained as women to know our rights," a young female paralegal said, relating how the paralegals had pushed to get a woman onto the sand management committee.

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5   That is, belonging to the generation which accessed new positions of power after the Kenyan independence in 1962.

6   In his election campaign in 2013, President Uhuru Kenyatta promoted himself as the choice of the "digital generation".

7   The name of the group ranch is a pseudonym.

I suggest that the ambiguous status of sand harvesting – as a widely coveted source of cash with uncertain ownership and user rights, and as a new livelihood practice pointing towards future wealth and development as well as towards cultural and environmental decay – opened up negotiations of social structure and cultural values based on generational and gendered hierarchies. School education came to play an important role in these negotiations. As is well documented in the regional anthropology of East Africa, generational hierarchies have been a central feature in the social structure among pastoralists in East Africa, including Maa-speakers in Northern Kenya, placing young men, and young women to an even greater degree, in structurally marginal positions within social, economic and political hierarchies (see, e.g., Spencer 1965). The actual political role of young people in different historical periods, as well as the inherent patriarchal ideology of the social system, has, however, been a matter of some debate (see, e.g., Hodgson 2000; Hughes 2006). Burgess, arguing for the need to historicize the study of youth (Burgess 2005, xiii), highlights how generational relations are "subject to revision and adaption according to changing political and economic conditions" (Burgess 2005, xi). My empirical material indicates that in Laikipia North today, while most power holders are still male elders, increasing education levels (encouraged by a strong global and national interest in Education for All), development activities, better access to media and changing government policies on youth[8] have all contributed to giving young people opportunities to challenge generational and gendered hierarchies. In particular, school education has served as an important asset for young men and, to a lesser degree, young women in gaining a stronger position in decision-making processes at the community level. Young men and women with schooling are thus increasingly allowed to share their opinions in public meetings and become involved in informal political discussions about decision making and power structures in the community. Still, this kind of political participation demands that the young people strike a balance

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8 Following the national elections in 2002, when the NARC government came into power, and the 2008 post-election violence, youth have become increasingly important in political discourse. A Ministry of Youth Affairs (later Youth Affairs and Sports) was inaugurated in 2005, initiating several new youth programmes focused in particular on employment creation, and in 2007 a National Youth Policy was launched. In their campaign for presidential power in 2012 Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto presented themselves as "youthful leaders" able to understand the problems of Kenyan youth and representing the "digital generation". Setting up a new government, Kenyatta incorporated youth affairs in the docket of the Ministry of Planning and Devolution, making youth affairs part of the Office of the President and introducing several new youth initiatives (personal communication with officers in the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in 2012, and the Department of Youth Affairs in 2014).

between using the knowledge gained from their schooling and demonstrating a respect for their community's cultural values. As such, in their attempts to ensure that the benefits of sand were distributed fairly within the community, the paralegals referred to ideas based on national law, human rights or school knowledge, while also emphasizing their knowledge of certain community values and practices, and making use of embodied registers of showing generational and gendered respect related to, for example, language use and gestures.

Hustling for a voice in generational and gendered hierarchies was thus a political practice which attempted to install a new kind of authority without openly challenging the elder generation and which required the young people to be constantly alert and on the look-out for opportunities and openings. When young paralegals said they 'hustled' to be heard in community affairs such as sand management, the implication was that, rather than assuming prescribed generational and gendered positions, they took their cue from the dynamic ways of operating of young Kenyans in the big cities. This celebration of doing things in a young and urban way, made possible by their positions as 'learned' youth, drew on a relatively new national attention to youth as manifested in Laikipia North through, for instance, the activities of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, NGO attention to youth participation and popular culture. As such, travelling ideas and practices were brought into generational and gendered disagreements about sand. In other situations, however, the conflict lines emanating from the sand lay elsewhere, dividing neighbouring communities.

Hustling for the Rights of the Marginalized

> Today we are basing our arguments on the constitution. So, we don't just say rights for the sake of saying that, but [because] it is articulated in the constitution. Secondly, we also want to [know], if selling the sand is not a right [for our community], why is it a right to the others? Why is it that when [Ntim] is harvesting [sand], it [the riverbed] is becoming a water catchment area? … [The sand] is a communal resource. Every member of the community has the right to use that resource; people cannot be denied to use a community resource. So, when we talk of our rights, we basically base them on our constitution. When we talk about the environment, the constitution says in article 56, it talks about minority rights, hunters and gatherers have the right to live on their ancestral lands. And the Yaaku ancestral land is this forest [the Mukogodo Forest]; it's their home.
>
> Paralegal from Laikipia North, 3/5/2014

The majority of the population of Laikipia North describe themselves as Maasai belonging to one of five sub-sections with different ethnic histories (see Herren 1988). In the Mukogodo sub-section, many people are descended from the Yaaku, a former hunter-gatherer and bee-keeping community living in and around the Mukogodo Forest which, in the first part of the 20th century, shifted to a Maasai identity and was included in the Maasai group (Cronk 2002). While recent decades have seen a revival of Yaaku identity (see Carrier 2011), the community occupies a low-status position in the area and is considered by its own members, as well as others, to be lagging behind in terms of development due to historical and contemporary low levels of formal education, ethnic history and the limited resources available for generating funds on group ranch land. The five Maasai subsections in the area inhabit 13 group ranches, and large scale sand harvesting is carried out on four of them. In 1979 these four group ranches founded a cooperative society (Loata Sand Dealers Cooperative Society) which regulates the extraction of sand through a rotation system which is supposed to ensure that the resource is not over-exploited. At the time of my fieldwork, there were no easily accessible bigger sand deposits in the group ranches inhabited by the Mukogodo community, and the cooperative society had denied membership to the Ntim group ranch. However, the group ranch committee had been allowed to cooperate with a few buyers to sell sand from a deposit owned by the county council. Some members of the group ranch maintained that they should also be permitted to harvest sand from the river which, they argued, formed the boundary between their group ranch and the neighbouring ranch. As the exact position of this boundary was contested, some paralegals (as well as other community members) claimed that their community was being discriminated against. They explained that when people from their community tried to harvest sand from the river bed, government officers who had been bribed by the neighbouring community would order them to stop, arguing that the river is a water catchment area and that sand harvesting is not allowed in that particular area. The paralegals in Ntim, in cooperation with the group ranch committee, addressed this problem by holding meetings, sending letters and negotiating with government officials. When negotiating access to sand and relations to the neighbouring communities, the paralegals thus toned down the generational war and instead switched to talking about the disadvantaged, 'historically marginalized' position of their community. They brought in the constitution, in this context referring to Chapter 4, the Bill of Rights, and in particular article 56 about the rights of minorities and marginalized communities, and to Chapter 5 about land and environment (Government of Kenya 2010).

Young people had particularly encountered globally travelling ideas (see Tsing 2005) about the environmental rights of marginalized, indigenous

communities in the paralegal training sessions. When indigenous communities all over the globe started mobilizing in struggles against historical injustices in the late 20th century, Maasai activists from Kenya and Tanzania were among the first African groups to join (see, e.g., Hodgson 2009). In Laikipia a key actor was the local NGO Osiligi (Organization for the Survival of Il-Laikipiak Indigenous Group Initative), which became well-known all over Kenya in the 2000s in connection with its campaign for Maasai land rights, with the organization receiving praise in Laikipia North for introducing paralegalism to the area. Although Osiligi was disbanded by the Kenyan government (see, e.g., Kantai 2007), in the wake of its struggle several other local organizations emerged and continued the paralegal training programmes, including organizations focusing on Yaaku culture and rights. With the new constitution, the attention to minorities and marginalized groups has been further inscribed in the national legal framework, offering new 'tools' for this political struggle. The political ambition of the organizations working with paralegalism was articulated as securing the rights to land and indigenous culture, and the use of this articulation in relation to sand has made sand harvesting a question of land and belonging. However, to the paralegals in Ntim the language of the constitution and the globally travelling idea of rights also offered ways of talking about everyday life conflicts with people from neighbouring communities, and possibilities for exploring individual political ambitions.[9] Their description of their political negotiations as 'hustling' rather than, for instance, 'advocacy' conveyed the mundane character of the political practice, and in particular the way in which community political interests were entwined with individual interest. Hustling for the rights of the marginalized in the context of sand was thus a way of emphasizing community belonging as well as exploring individual interests by drawing on the global rhetoric of indigenous rights. Furthermore, the question of rights was central to negotiations with the state.

Hustling the Law

At least you use all means and methods to get your rights. Because to confuse all those government leaders, and they have power, they can arrest you for making even… for confusing them you use a lot of methods. You shout, make noise, go with the number, you shout, *bwana* [man], you

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9   The new prospects for political representation of marginalized communities potentially open up new political positions.

sing, write posters, you call the press; that is hustling. We hustle the law, we bring the press.

<div align="right">Paralegal from Laikipia North, 3/5/2014</div>

In the minds of most of the young people from Laikipia North with whom I interacted during my fieldwork, their area was primarily a peripheral place with few opportunities for employment, 'development' or political influence, disadvantaged in terms of climate and natural resources and forgotten by both national and regional power holders – not part of the 'real' Kenya. The Kenyan state was mostly talked about as a negative force which had failed to secure their land, overlooked their development needs, and only entered their lives from time to time: for instance to clamp down on cattle raids.[10] Pastoral communities on the Greater Horn of Africa have often been described as 'borderlands' or 'margins' in which the populations practice "the art of not being governed" (see Scott 2009) by repelling "incorporation, avoiding taxation, resisting external imposition, and maintaining an apparently war-like stance in relation to state efforts" (Catley, Lind and Scoones 2013, 12). The picture in Laikipia North, however, appears more messy. While many people pronounced their community to be in constant political opposition to the government, the young paralegals also aspired to closer incorporation into the Kenyan state and its development schemes. Their practices of challenging the role and corruption of government officers in the sand trade bring to light ambiguous relations to the state.

While state and community perspectives on the value of livestock and pastoralism have often been at odds in Kenya, the political negotiations between paralegals and government officers regarding sand were based on something of a consensus about the value of the material, which was seen by both parties in monetary terms. The political question was thus not the status of the sand but the distribution of benefits, and the paralegals described their negotiations as aiming to secure their rights to 'development' and 'citizenship'. Sometimes the paralegals attacked government officials openly by engaging in somewhat confrontational activities, as described in the quote above; that is, by organizing demonstrations and calling the press. One example was a demonstration in 2013 which (among other things) accused the state administration, and in particular the police, of being involved in corruption in relation to the sand trade.[11] In other cases political activities were more peaceful, focusing on

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10   Cattle raids have a long history in the pastoral societies of northern Kenya. See, e.g., Greiner 2013 for a discussion of the contemporary role of cattle raids in the region.

11   I did not personally witness this event, but was told about it in interviews conducted in 2014.

negotiations, such as when the paralegals in Ntim had approached and pressurized the District Commissioner to ensure that civil servants at lower levels kept their hands out of the sand business. "We pressured him by the powers granted by the new constitution. I thank God now we have the new constitution in place," a paralegal told me, referring (indirectly) to Chapter 13 in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya (Government of Kenya 2010) about the values and principles of public service. In this way they framed their political negotiations within the structures of the state rather than attacking it from outside. In addition to the constitution the paralegals also made use of technology, proudly describing themselves as part of the "digital generation" as proclaimed by President Kenyatta (see note 6). In community meetings, often organized by the local chief (a government official, but from the local community), they usually brought along cameras and tape recorders. As one of them explained: "When I attend the chief's *baraza* [meeting], they see a problem, because they cannot do things in the way they are doing. Me, I do things transparently, because I take the minutes, I even tape the sounds and everything." In situations like these, technologies were primarily employed as representations of 'transparency' and doing things 'straight' or 'in the right way', with the secondary function of producing documentation.

Attempting to challenge the corruption of government officers, the paralegals drew, eclectically and situationally, on their knowledge of the new constitution, advocacy methods such as demonstrations and media liaison, and the workings of digital technologies. While making use of state 'vocabulary', they were reformulating or reframing ideas, practices or technologies to suit their own purpose. The reason that this way of operating was conceived of as hustling was its use of "all means and methods": a way of improvising which corresponds to hustling in the economic realm. Hustling for a livelihood means bending rules and using multiple techniques for earning the daily bread, and hustling as political practice shares these characteristics. A tactician in de Certeau's sense (1984, xvii), a hustler is not in control of the situation, but is still able to act and push things in certain directions, exploiting openings and possibilities. This means that hustling involves constantly negotiating positions of autonomy and dependence – of belonging to and standing out from the community, and of being in opposition to and integrated within the state.

Hustling as Political Agency

In this chapter I have suggested that the rise in the exploitation of a natural resource, sand, has played an important role in opening a new political space

for young people with school education and experiences of NGO training. My exploration of young people's talk about hustling in the context of their involvement in negotiations of sand management indicates that the term is used as a metaphor, designating political practices which challenge authority and contest different kinds of social arrangements, such as gendered and generational hierarchies, community relations and state power. The negotiation of such power hierarchies is an improvisational political practice, requiring one to be constantly alert and on the lookout for opportunities and openings created by the situation of social change in the community. Hustling suggests a way of operating politically characterized by drawing impromptu on eclectic forms of knowledge, doing things in a 'young' and 'urban' way, the bending of rules and the use of a multiplicity of tactics, and the intertwinement of personal and communal interests. Hustling is not a political practice of youth rebelling against conservative social structures; rather it is the political navigations of youth in times of change and uncertainty (see Vigh 2006) involving young people who, paradoxically perhaps, target short-term social change in order to obtain a more stable and settled position in the future. Sand inspires political hustling because the social rules regulating its management are less settled within the community than the regulations regarding, for instance, the use of pasture and the management of livestock. Furthermore, the sale of sand creates connections to distant places, necessitating negotiations with outsiders in which young people with language skills and the knowledge of national conditions obtained through schooling are able to become mediators.

Using the empirical term 'hustling' as a window onto young people's everyday political engagements with the environment provides insights into how political engagement is experienced as experimenting with different means in an improvisatory manner, or moving in "uncertain circumstances" (Vigh 2009: 419), but also points to the ways in which political practice links to economic interests in terms of access to material resources. Operating politically in this way implies situational and improvisatory negotiations of established assumptions about the status of environmental materials and the nature of relations between people and the environment, enabled, in particular, by drawing on globally travelling knowledge. Thus, in Laikipia North, the paralegals introduced school ideas about natural resources and global practices of youth participation when negotiating old men's claims to the proceeds from the sale of sand. They referred to global concepts concerning the rights of marginalized communities when challenging community boundaries, and they made use of ideas in the Kenyan constitution and technological practices when challenging the corruption of government officers. As such, while acknowledging the structural constraints on young people's political agency, a focus on hustling draws

attention to the ways in which knowledge travelling in global connections (Tsing 2005) is put to use by locally situated youth in creative political action.

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"Acholi Youth Are Lost": Young, Christian and (A)political in Uganda

Henni Alava

Introduction

During a focus group discussion with a group of young adults in northern Uganda[1] in January 2013, a rather heated debate broke out over whether or not youth in post-war northern Uganda were 'lost'. What constituted being lost? If youth were indeed lost, was it their own fault? Was the reason for their 'lost-ness' the war between the Lord's Resistance Movement/Army (LRM/A) and the Ugandan government, in the midst of which they had grown up? Or were the elders to blame, having failed to guide young people and provide them with the support they needed? Or rather, was the real culprit the Internet, through which Western values were infiltrating Acholi lifeworlds?

The group, which two of my research assistants had recruited from among their friends to conduct participant observation at Christmas morning services as part of my research on churches in post-war Acholiland, provided a representative cross-section of the well-educated young urban population in the region. Of the 20–30-year-olds, a few were active Catholics, another few active Protestants;[2] some had one foot in a Pentecostal-Charismatic church (PCC)

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[1]   Northern Uganda or Acholiland is formally known as the Acholi sub-region, an area inhabited primarily by speakers of the Acholi language, whom I refer to as the Acholi. According to the latest census, there are 1.47 million ethnic Acholi in Uganda, amounting to 4.4 per cent of the total population. Kitgum is one of seven administrative districts in the sub-region, and the total population of its centre, Kitgum town, is approximately 45, 000 residents. (UBOS 2016).

[2]   Following Ugandan practice, I refer to the Church of Uganda, which is an Anglican church, and to its members, as 'Protestants', and to the Roman Catholic Church in Uganda simply as Catholic. These two mainline churches set root in Acholiland in the early 1900s, by way of Catholic Italian Comboni missionaries, and the British Church Missionary Society. The two churches played crucial roles in Uganda's political history, and still constitute the two largest denominations, although increasingly competing for members with the rapidly proliferating and expanding Pentecostal-Charismatic churches (see Alava 2017b, Bompani 2016, Bremner 2013, Ward 2015).

and the other in one of the old missionary-established churches; some had a church-going family but themselves felt increasingly distanced from any religious community; and one was a fiery assistant pastor at a small Pentecostal church. While the group disagreed about many of the questions I list above, there was one thing on which they all agreed: increasing numbers of young Acholi could rightly be characterized as 'lost'.

In this chapter, I analyse how the public discourse of 'lost youth' in post-war Acholiland manifests and is engaged with, particularly among well-educated Catholic and Protestant youngsters and young adults in the region who considered themselves 'not lost'. I argue that the discourse of 'lostness' emerged in relation to my young informants' disillusioned views on formal politics and the Ugandan state, and suggest that in distinguishing themselves from those who are 'lost', and in suggesting solutions to 'lostness', young Catholics and Protestants were expressing a particular kind of political agency: not being lost was seen as a prerequisite to being able to contribute to societal development and, ultimately, to being a politically engaged citizen. Finally, I demonstrate that, although the discourse of 'lostness' expressed a moral-panic type concern with the perceived uncontrollability of youth (Diouf 2003), embodying desires for rather conservative societal transformations, the discourse was also employed as a tool of critique against the ruling government.

The chapter draws from altogether nine months of ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted in a Catholic and Protestant parish in northern Uganda's second-largest town, Kitgum, between 2012 and 2016. Every Sunday morning, the churches of these denominations fill up for two services, packed to the brink with a largely young crowd. This is no surprise, considering that under-20-year-olds make up nearly 60 per cent of the national population (in 2014, UBOS 2016, 14), and that Uganda is, at least statistically and by confession, Africa's most religious country (Pew Research Center 2010). In recent years however, many young Catholics and Protestants have switched to Pentecostal churches while of those young people who attend mainline missionary churches, only a minority invest time in church outside of regular Sunday services. It is this minority – specifically, young adults who take on responsibilities in church administration, the youth team or the parish choir – that I spent most time with during my fieldwork, and whose perceptions of politics I focus on in this chapter.

Although my informants were well-educated, lived in an urban setting, and were thus hardly representative of 'Acholi youth' as a whole, they also lived amid considerable constraints and frustrations with regards their aspirations: jobs were sparse, and even those with secure incomes were often weighed down by the expense of relatives or younger siblings who frequently lived under their

care. As one of my informants put it to me, due to the lack of genuinely viable alternatives for the future, many young people gambled on getting lucky at a betting agency or simply despaired, took to the bottle and partied their way into HIV-infection. In contrast to such 'lost' trajectories, my informants posited themselves as people who did the best they could in trying circumstances: they educated themselves, farmed the land they had access to through their clan or that they rented with groups of friends or developed small business ventures. But, at the same time, they moulded themselves into individuals who might be spotted and trusted by business associates, future employers or potential benefactors: they went to church, dressed smartly, joined the choir and did things considered socially respectable. Since these activities took considerable time and effort, and since there was, as I will show, no trust in formal politics, the young men and women I knew in Kitgum largely saw attending political rallies or worrying over which corrupt and useless party should receive their vote as rather pointless.

Following this introduction, I briefly frame the interests driving this chapter in light of literature on politics and religion in Africa. Thereafter, I introduce the research context, and describe the way in which 'lostness' was articulated in post-war Acholiland. I then show how, since attitudes towards formal politics were characterized by disillusionment, it was considered more productive to gear attempts at transformation through other means than those offered by formal politics. Finally, I suggest that while young Catholic and Protestant adults can in some sense be described as conservative conformists, their attempts at moulding themselves and other youth into productive members of the community can be seen as a deeply political project. The chapter closes with comments on what the case I analyse offers to studies on youth and politics in Africa more broadly.

Unpacking Politics and Religion

From a state-centric perspective, youth who primarily engage in religious activities rather than party politics or NGO-type civil society activism might be classified as 'apolitical'. But what constitutes politics? Manglos and Weinreb recently analysed the extent to which religious activity correlates with what they term an "interest in politics", which the authors define as the "first step to political engagement" (Manglos and Weinreb 2013, 200). In the Afrobarometer data, on which the analysis is premised, interest in politics is calculated on the basis of respondent's answers to two questions: *"When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters frequently,*

occasionally, or never?"; and *"How interested would you say you are in public affairs?"* (Afrobarometer 2014). In light of my research experience, however, these questions are somewhat problematic, and in turn provoke the question: what exactly constitutes "public affairs" or "political issues"? For example, some of my young friends in Kitgum were keenly interested in dispute-settling processes within their clan or neighbourhood, in power struggles within their diocese or parish or in rumours and fears about the presence of witches in Kitgum. Most of these same young adults denied any particular interest in party politics or matters of the state. What might they have been expected to answer in the Afrobarometer questionnaire? Were they interested in public affairs?

According to a state-centric or party-political understanding of 'politics', or an early Habermasian understanding of the public sphere, none of the issues I mention above – neighbourhood courts, church politics or rumours – would count as political matters, or public affairs per se. Such state-centric perspectives have also been echoed in previous research on religion and politics in Africa. Much important scholarship has been produced about the institutional relations between political and religious elites (Gifford 1998; Ward 2005), the various divisive roles of religion (classic studies such as Clapham 1993; Laitin 1986; but also Cheney 2012), and how religious participation and education has contributed to the development of civic consciousness (Manglos and Weinreb, 2013; VonDoepp 2002).

More culturally oriented scholarship has sought to unpack the state-centricity of much analysis on religion and politics in Africa, expanding analysis beyond the 'formal political sphere'. For instance, scholars have analysed the subversive nature of religious ritual and language in itself (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Ellis and Haar 2007), particularly that expressed in Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (Gusman 2009; van Dijk 1992; Meyer 2011), and in gospel music (Bjerk 2005; Lamont 2010), while other scholars have analysed the important political role religious groups play as communal networks (Christiansen 2011; Englund 2011). Jones (2009; 2013) has suggested that to understand what creates meaningful social belonging and societal change in rural Africa, one should look beyond the state, while Englund (2011a), has suggested replacing sterile debates about the content and definition of 'politics' with analysis of how adherents draw on religion in their everyday lives, including in their political actions and thoughts. In this vein, Ross Wignall's work has interpreted religion in Africa through a focus on how faith-based organizations seek to mould moral subjectivities and, in so doing, entrench neoliberal subjectivity among the targets of their youth work (Wignall 2016). In the case I present, as in the case described by Wignall, religion is not solely an arena for religious expression, but provides a space and platform from which young people can question

the authority of their elders, and advance critiques of the ill-functioning politics of the state. I thus build in this chapter on what Mahmood describes as the "longstanding feminist insight that any political transformation necessarily entails working on those embodied registers of life that are often cordoned off from the realm of 'pure politics'" (Mahmood 2011, 34).

Lost after War in Northern Uganda

The discourse on lost youth is widespread in Acholiland, and during the time I have spent in Kitgum town, I have regularly come across it in varied settings (see also Verma 2013; Vorhölter 2012; Vorhölter 2014). In certain ways, the Acholi discourse on youth is typical of discourses in which young people are collectively blamed for what are perceived as the ills of society (Diouf 2003). The fearful talk about 'lost youth' is, however, accentuated in particular ways in Acholiland, which was ravaged by a brutal war between the Ugandan government and the LRM/A from 1986 to 2006, during which the largely young rebel army attacked both government soldiers and traditional Acholi cultural institutions such as chiefs. Many of the abducted young rebels, who were themselves Acholi, were coerced into attacking their families and homes, but young people also joined the LRM/A voluntarily, and were often sympathetic to the rebels' political aims (Finnström 2008). In light of the memory of rebellion in the region, public discourse on youth in post-war Acholiland oscillates between portraying them as vulnerable and traumatized victims of war and poverty, and as potentially dangerous disrupters of fragile societal peace. As shown in Cecilie Verma's research, this sense of ambivalence and unpredictability is encapsulated in the Acholi concept of *lakite*, 'somehow', which is often used to describe the category of youth (Verma 2013).

Often, 'lostness' was attributed to the war, and to the materially, socially and psychologically distressing circumstances to which children were exposed during it. But these analyses by my informants did not relate 'lostness' simply to the experiences and subsequent behaviour of individual representatives of the 'lost youth'. Rather, the 'lostness' of youth was a symptom of a general brokenness of social harmony (Porter 2013) in Acholi society, and of the breakdown of patterns of traditional, patriarchal and gerontocratic authority encapsulated within this idealized vision of harmonious co-existence (ibid., see also Alava 2017a). The breakdown of traditional authority was a process that had begun prior to the war, but was further exacerbated by the LRM/A's actions, and by what was broadly seen as the inadequacy of attempts by Acholi elders to deal with the war (Finnström 2006). To my young informants, the consequences

of this breakdown were evident everywhere around them: among their neighbours, their relatives, often their younger and sometimes older siblings and – for those working in education – among their students.

Rubangakene, a youth leader of a Catholic parish in Kitgum, who was trained in a Catholic seminary and currently worked as a university lecturer, described to me how Catholic youth programs had tried to help youth during the war.[3] The challenge, embedded as it was in the socio-economic structural realities of the war, was enormous:

> The soldiers, they had lots of money, they were being paid well. Whereas in the camps, there was nothing. So there were lots of young girls with no money, and lots of soldiers with money. Almost all the girls were spoiled. And that is why we have such high HIV infection rates here – most of the soldiers were infected, because they had been moving around. And then there was the alcohol. For only 100 shillings you could buy a sachet, and these were strong! So you only needed three sachets and a young child, he was gone. They could lay a few bricks, get one hundred, and that was it. (Fieldwork notes)

Rubangakene explained how difficult it had been for the Christian youth leaders to convince their charges to spend their time watching character-building Catholic films, rather than the Western films of sex and violence that business-minded individuals presented at the displacement camps and in Kitgum town. Many young people had moved alone into the relative safety of the towns, or spent their nights at night commuter centres. To address this separation of children and youths from their families and clans, the church brought clan elders together to educate the young about their cultural traditions, but getting them to come and listen to the elders was a constant uphill struggle. Pressing his head in his hands in frustration, Rubangakene sighed, "Even up to these days, those problems are there."

It was broadly agreed that heavy drinking reached new heights during the war, and the general opinion was that the use of alcohol had skyrocketed when sachets of potent liquor became available at low prices throughout the region. To a degree, the public discourse condemning alcohol abuse could be seen as an outcome of encounters with moralistic Christian narratives, since drinking had already been regarded as a serious problem for Africans by early missionaries (see e.g. Willis 1914). Drinking was seen as a critical societal challenge

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3   All names in the chapter are pseudonyms. In the case of some informants, I have also chosen to conceal their gender and the church to which they belong in order to conceal identities.

in Acholiland, not only by the Protestants who frowned upon alcohol abuse in general, but also by the Catholics whose views on alcohol were more relaxed. For instance, in response to public pressure by Catholic clergy who had been lobbying on the topic for years, the sale of the cheapest sachets of non-standardized alcohol was banned in Kitgum district in 2015.[4] Many teachers mentioned that they had problems with sachets in schools, where even young students would be found with liquor in their pockets.

The second concern related to the standard of education in the region, and to the commitment by Acholi youth to schooling. While the introduction of Universal Primary Education in Uganda has increased the percentage of the young population attending school, it has also overloaded schools with more students than they can reasonably handle. Almost all Catholic schools, once considered of a high standard, have been obliged to take on all the students who sign up. With class sizes growing much faster than the schools' resources, everyone in Kitgum seemed to agree that the previously renowned Catholic schools had, under UPE and the significant pressure caused by almost two decades of war, seriously plummeted in quality (see also Higgins 2007). All parents with the financial means to do so sent their children to boarding schools in other parts of the country – often Kampala. This was seen as a huge problem, particularly among my Catholic acquaintances, since it was compounding the dilemma of the Acholi people: children were brought up by teachers in boarding schools rather than their parents and clans, surrounded by English and Luganda rather than their mother tongue and by Western or cultural influences, while their exposure to their own cultural heritage became limited to the Christmas vacation.

Although, as I describe below, efforts were made to tackle these problems, Rubangakene once suggested to me that that the problems of youth would only be overcome by a different generation – one not born and raised during the war (see also Vorhölter 2014, 199).

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4   Since much of the alcohol consumed in this region is home-brewed, there seems to be no quantitative data available on actual consumption rates. In any case, the omnipresence of empty *waragi* (gin) bags along streets in Kitgum, the commonplaceness of drunk men, more seldom women, and male youth drunk at all times of the day, as well as the prevalence of stories and complaints by people of all ages about alcohol misuse, did suggest that drinking was causing social unrest widely in the region. Interestingly, a recent study (Roberts et al. 2011) questions the widely spread official narrative of increased alcohol consumption in displacement camps. See Blattman's (2007) reflection on the relationship between alcohol consumption and humanitarian assistance, and the study by Kizza et al. (2012) of alcohol and suicide in post-conflict northern Uganda.

> But these ones, it's very hard... The youth who went through the situation... this rebel what... They don't have character because they don't know actually what they do. Either they don't know, or they, they just find that life is what comes your way. Whatever comes your way is what you call life. So you find them here drinking, you find them there, they are dancing. Some do it because of frustration. They have lost their family members. Some they do it's a habit... because there was nothing contrary that they would hear.... And up to now, if you get that age group, it is very hard to manage... Very hard. You find they're very hard to deal with. (Interview 2013)

A crucial point to make here concerns the particular understanding of 'lostness' in the context of the churches I studied. Being 'lost' has particular connotations in Christian discourse, where not being lost – as was one of the lost lambs of the biblical parable's shepherd – is to be found, and to be saved. In PCCs, emphasis is placed on spiritual salvation through a conscious choice to follow Christ, baptism by submersion (as opposed to the sprinkling used in the Protestant and Catholic Church), the receiving of gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and, subsequently, a morally upright life, whereby the 'saved' person refrains from sinful behaviour. As Gusman has shown, the notion of a "Joseph generation" of "saved" PCC Ugandan youth "proposes that a new, morally pure youthful generation will be able to reverse the moral corruption of the parental generation ... and will thus transform Ugandan society from within" (2009, 69).

There is an important difference in this PCC framing of 'lostness', and that employed by my informants: among the Catholic and Protestant communities I studied, being 'lost' was *not* framed as a primarily spiritual condition – and not as the opposite of being 'saved' in the sense implied by PCCs. There were certainly similarities between the PCC formulations described by Gusman above, and those of my Catholic and Protestant informants, in that both saw 'immoral' behaviour as an indication of 'lostness': namely, my informants associated 'lostness' with loose morals, disrespect for authority and a lack of what one of them termed "developmental thinking". But analysis of the root causes of 'lostness', and hence also of the means required to address it, were noticeably different. While PCCs conceptualize 'lostness' largely as a condition that can be fixed through the rejuvenation of an individual's relationship with God, among mainline churches 'lostness' was perceived as a condition that required the transformation and actions not only of an individual and of God, but of the entire community.

In the group discussion with which I opened this chapter, the only person to suggest spiritual salvation as a solution to 'lostness' was the young Pentecostal pastor. In contrast, for the Catholics and Protestants present in the discussion, as in numerous other discussions I had on the topic, the remedy for 'lostness' was presented in the *wang oo,* or evening fires where youth gather to learn from elders about 'Acholi tradition'. Elders and many youth in Acholi describe *wang oo*, with great nostalgia, as the tradition suspended for years during the war and is to this day largely lost in urban areas. For many mainline Christian youth, the solution for 'lostness' was thus not seen in moments of spiritual rapture, but in church communities, and those parts of Acholi tradition that were compatible with Christianity. Furthermore, the location where youth would be inculcated into the church and into tradition was the God-fearing and tradition-embracing family (Alava 2017a). Through resources transmitted by the church, tradition and "holy families" (ibid.), it would be possible to make sense of the violent past and to imagine and bring into being a more peaceful way of co-existence in the future. In contrast, without religion and tradition, war-affected Acholi youth were seen as destined to become lost: washed away and destroyed by the ills of modernity, by alcohol or drugs, or by the trauma of war.

If something was not done, my informants feared, all these lost Acholi youth would be unable to contribute to the civic, political or economic development of their region, their churches, or their nation. For instance, a 20-year-old Catholic woman, Sarah, lamented that with all their drinking, fornicating, never bothering to get up for weekday morning prayers and often even skipping prayers on Sunday, and wearing blouses that were too low-cut when they did come to pray, all these lost youth would never become good citizens. How would any of them be able to replace the current leaders and take the country towards something better, when they did not even know how to behave? Adopting a less moralistic tone, others, such as Rubangakene whom I mentioned above, analysed the failure of families, as well as Acholi cultural and religious institutions, to constructively steer what he referred to as the flow of youth towards productive ends: "Youth are like water," he declared. "It flows, and its flow needs to be directed" (fieldwork notes). Similarly, another Catholic man explained the necessity of authority to lost youth by stating, "Human beings need rules, otherwise chaos kicks in."

Much like what Mahmood (2011) has argued to be the logic of Muslim piety movements, submission and obedience to religious practices and authority – in some cases coupled with 'customary' practices and authority – was seen as conducive to the formation of better human beings, better institutions and, eventually, better politics. Before describing the ways in which my informants

suggested the flow of water should be directed, I briefly sketch the broader political context within which analyses of 'lostness' were set.

Disillusionment with Politics

Early on in my fieldwork, while sipping a cold drink in the yard of the Bohma, the nicest hotel in Kitgum town, I asked Akena, a young Catholic woman, what people in Kitgum thought about places like this which had been established during the northern Ugandan war by members of the political and military elite, mainly to cater for the largely expatriate humanitarian staff who travelled to inspect the camps set up for internally displaced people. In many places, civilians were not displaced as a direct result of rebel attacks, but as part of the anti-insurgency tactics of the Ugandan army (Branch 2011; Dolan 2009; Finnström 2008). Akena began her answer by stating:

> People think the leaders are corrupt, you know, embezzling funds, that sort of thing. The system in Uganda... It's complicated.

She went on to observe that some people were obviously benefiting from politics, explaining how annoyed people were about Museveni's decision to buy a fighter plane.

> People are crying "but there's no war!" There is really high inflation, and the currency is being devalued, and he just buys a plane.

In contrast, she claimed, when the previous president, Milton Obote, had been in power, there had at least been accountability:[5]

> Obote came to show the receipts – he made sure people knew where the money was going. But with Museveni, there's nothing. But there's nothing we can do. We have no voice. We have no voice.

I stayed quiet for a moment, and then said, "But you elect them!" which made Akena smile. After a moment's pause, she continued:

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5   Milton Obote was president of Uganda from 1966–1971 and again from 1981–1985. His second regime was followed by the brief presidency of the Acholi general Tito Okello, who was deposed by the current president, Yoweri Museveni, in 1986.

But people say, the ones they have elected, they are wrong. Some benefit, sure. But now, most people are just tired. And the elections for us here, also…

Her laughter trailed off in a way that signalled she had nothing more to say on the subject. Months later she brought up the topic of elections again, explaining that they were good for nothing, since all the votes were bought. Even her friends and relatives had "received envelopes" containing money from ruling party politicians in the run-up to the election and, as others also later explained to me, many were willing to "give Museveni a little" in the election, since he was willing to "give them a little" in the run-up to the vote.[6] Almost everyone I knew expressed sympathy for one or more of the leading opposition politicians – many of whom were themselves Acholi – and expressed the wish that the political leadership in Uganda would finally change after 27 years of Museveni's rule. Yet in the 2011 elections which, while flawed, were still considered an improvement on previous elections, Museveni had secured stronger support in the north than ever before (EU EOM 2011; Titeca and Onyango 2012); even in the 2016 elections, although support for the NRM dipped a little in Acholiland, indicating increased frustration with the government's inability to deliver on promises, the ruling regime were victorious (Vokes and Wilkins, 2017).

Museveni's regime in Uganda has been characterized by the instrumental blending of liberal elements into what is in fact a semi-authoritarian regime (Tripp 2010; Goodfellow 2014), creating a situation where there is no level playing field from which the political opposition could launch any genuine alternative to the current regime (Titeca and Onyango 2012). As one young friend put it when reading an early draft of this chapter: "NRM *is* the government." The majority of stories and commentaries that I heard about politics in Kitgum were steeped in cynicism, apathy, ridicule or annoyance. Many of my actively practising Catholic informants in particular indicated that it would be impossible for them to engage with party politics, because doing politics would require them to sell their principles: to start lying, deceiving and playing games. As a teenage altar boy explained to me, "Most politicians are liars. They will come and say they're Christians, but they don't do good things." Thus, he concluded, "It is better to be a bishop than a politician. Because as a politician, you might make a promise, but once you would have that power, you would

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6   Writing of the 2011 elections, Titeca and Onyango note that a widely held perception in Uganda was that "while the 2006 elections were flooded with violence, the 2011 elections were flooded with money" (Titeca and Onyango 2012, 128).

forget all about it" (fieldwork notes, March 2013). Since there was little faith in formal politics, any efforts put into advancing things considered worthy were seen as better placed in other spheres of life.

Bringing in the Lost

Within the context of the churches I studied, attempts to address lostness were identifiable at both an institutional and individual level: the churches, as institutions, were investing in education, individual Catholic and Protestant youth were investing heavily in moulding their own characters, while both churches and youth sought to contribute in various ways to building the character of the 'lost youth' within their sphere of influence.

   With the lead of the Catholic Archbishop of Gulu and the retired Protestant Bishop of Kitgum, Acholi religious leaders had taken it upon themselves to intervene in what was seen as the downward spiral of Acholi youth towards a state of lostness. Alongside their sermons and youth outreach programs for educating Christian youth and directing them towards decent lifestyles, they were lobbying heavily for investments in education by individual expatriate Acholis and willing donors. Because the government was not seen to be investing in education in the region, it was considered of paramount importance to invest in it privately. The more resource-endowed Catholic Church had started systematically investing in building up private educational institutions: the Archbishop Flynn Senior Secondary School in Pader, established in 2009, produced the highest academic results in the northern region with its first class of graduates, and thus provided a viable alternative to sending children away from Acholiland. According to the school's principal, a priest, its success was largely a consequence of its commitment to moulding the character of their students:

> You know in the camps people were living just next to each other. It was just dirty, you could not clean yourself; you did not clean the toilet; all these things, nobody cared. So now, we teach the youth about caring about the environment. About having trees, about keeping places clean. We tell them that you wash yourself, you cut your hair, you dress appropriately, you brush your teeth. So that when you are sitting next to a person, it is also comfortable for them. I talk to them about greetings, about good manners and politeness. They say we are disturbing them, but soon they see the point. By the end of the first term, parents say they are acting differently.
>
> Fieldwork notes, March 2013

The younger parish youth in particular whom I interviewed, both in the Catholic and the Protestant Church, observed that participating in the activities of the church had helped them, and continued to help them, to behave properly, a sentiment Vorhölter (2014) also encountered among youth who participated in so-called cultural groups. As one Protestant senior-six graduate explained to me:

> Joining the choir also changed my life because you know as a youth there is evil ways you know… So if you join choir that time when you are doing all those things, you will be free of doing those other things – the evil things, you know. (Interview, March 2013)

The young man was the child of a person of considerable standing within this church. The pressure to conform to the expectations of how a decent Christian youth should behave were thus great, and taking part in the activities of the church, and associating with active members of the parish, assisted in living up to these expectations. A somewhat similar sentiment was expressed to me by the 12–15-year-old altar servants at the Catholic Church, who explained that they were drawn to become altar servants because they had seen the effect on other young people: "They were doing charitable works, like helping the disabled. I liked their ways, because it changed your heart to become a good child, so that you do not miss prayers" (Interview, April 2013). Through their service to the church, the boys explained, they had learned smartness, discipline and respect. The Catholic and Protestant young people who volunteered their time for church youth activities had found a way of becoming 'good Christians' and 'good people' and, through so doing, of coming to terms with, and scraping a living for their family amidst, the precarious circumstances of post-war Acholiland. In sum, in the absence of a formal politics inspiring belief that Uganda as a whole might become 'less lost' under the present government, my informants focused on not being lost themselves: on building their own lives, and the lives of their children, as best as they might in the constricted possibilities granted to them.

It was sometimes suggested to me that it was in fact in the interests of the ruling political elite that young people were lost – whether to booze, HIV/AIDS, pop music or betting agencies – as they would not protest in ways that might threaten the political establishment. They would not be in the right state of mind – nor possess the necessary political, educational or social skills – to pose such a threat. Those previous generations who had been part of the LRM/A had of course posed a serious threat to stability. But the LRM/A was certainly not seen as a role model or ideal future trajectory by many of those young

adults who had spent years of their life walking each night to displacement camps and town centres in search of safety from rebel attacks and abductions. From this perspective then, the project of parish youth in northern Uganda to express their aspirations in choir practise or youth gatherings, and to improve themselves through education and volunteer jobs, as well as their ambition to assist other young people around them to do the same, can be read as an inherently political project.

Conservative Conformism or Political Agency?

The case I have presented contributes two general perspectives to discussions on African youth and politics. First of all, by introducing a group of mainline Christian young adults, I focus on a group that is seldom written about in studies of young Africans. There are, arguably, many more young adults in Uganda who take an active role in the lives of their churches than there are those who engage in civil society activism or party politics. The geography they inhabit is not the "geography of the streets" that Diouf (2003, 15) argues African youth has occupied so as escape "the logics of public and administrative control, communitarian perceptions and state surveillance". Rather, the space of the churches that they choose to inhabit is a public space that is broadly considered socially and morally acceptable, and that is governed by often notable administrative and ecclesial control. Rather than radical and as such dangerous or inspiring, depending on one's reading of it, these young people can be described as conservative conformists.

The second point to be drawn from this case is that while they are actively practising Christians, they are *not* so in the way of members of charismatic churches, the growth of which has been documented all over Africa. While Acholi youth also increasingly attend these new and lively churches, old mission churches continue to attract enormous numbers of young people and adults to participate weekly in their activities. The solution of mainline Christian youngsters to the lostness of youth – and to the decadence and suffering in society – is not the Holy Spirit and a complete rupture with the past and with preceding generations (see, e.g., Gusman 2009). In fact, rather than advocating a complete break with the past, many young Catholics and Protestants were hesitant about what they called "*savedee*" churches, which advocated a radical break and condemnation of Acholi traditional practices, and felt these churches were disturbing the peace and causing even further confusion. Rather, what many young Catholics and Protestants saw as the solution to lostness of youth and society alike was the revival of Acholi culture, combined

with deepened commitment to the churches introduced to Acholiland by missionaries a century earlier. For them, a (re)turn to the church and tradition provided alternatives to the confusion of contemporary society, to the violent solutions previously advocated by rebellious youth in northern Uganda and the formal politics of the state and political parties.

Yet both these arguments come with an important caveat. For while churches and tradition were seen as the solution to which these young people were prone to turn, their relationships to both 'tradition' and to their churches were ambivalent. Some hovered between their old churches and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches; others between their churches' official doctrine about Acholi clan practice and their own or their families' views. As one friend put it: "We [urban youth] are striving to find a balance. And it will take a while." And while the official narrative in Kitgum, to which they subscribed, was that the revival of clan tradition and the authority of elders was a positive development, in practice they were often resistant to, and critical of, the expectations their clan relatives, and their elders, had of them – for instance regarding their duty to perform customary funeral rites for their deceased relatives.

As Christiansen writes of parish youth in rural Eastern Uganda (Christiansen 2011), those in Kitgum often criticized older generations for failing to provide them with the financial and emotional support they needed. For this group, the churches – and the foreign missionaries of the Catholic Church in particular – provided crucially important alternative support networks. Years of attendance at these churches had of course profoundly influenced their ways of seeing themselves and the world. To find spaces within church hierarchies, church youth were obliged, to an extent at least, to subscribe to the official discourse deployed by the churches about 'lost' Acholi youth. But these young adults were not simply blindly bending to clerical authority. For instance, none of my young informants who had families had been married in church (Alava 2017a), despite both the Catholic and Protestant Churches strongly pressuring their members to do so. Young people openly judged clergy on the extent to which they facilitated and supported their taking on active roles in the churches. Moreover, they were actively and often publically – through their activities as choir members, voluntary preachers, members of churches' decision-making bodies and as educators of other members of their age cohort – seeking to mould the ways in which youth were viewed by other members of society (see Christiansen 2011).

For those active young Catholics and Protestants on whom I have focused in this analysis, the 'lost youth' were those who had given up trying to move forward and grow into respectable adults. In contrast, my informants sought a balance between the alternative and often competing moral, political,

social and spiritual realms in ways that would maximize both their individual well-being (in terms of income, building up their good character and beneficial connections) as well as broader communal and societal development and peaceful co-existence. As Mahmood has argued,

> [The exercise of freedom] turns not only on the ability to distance oneself from the social, but also, more importantly, on the capacity to turn one's gaze critically to reflect upon oneself in order to determine the horizon of possibilities and strategies through which one acts upon the world.
>
> MAHMOOD 2011, 150

I argue that mainline Christian Acholi youth were taking part in this ultimately political project through the ways in which they analysed and responded to the 'lostness' of their peers. But this was not a straightforward task: expanding the concept of *hustling,* in which the young informants of Mats Utas engaged in their everyday business of survival in Free Town in Sierra Leone (Christensen, Utas and Vium 2013), one might suggest that my informants were engaged in a type of hustling between alternative moral, political, social and spiritual realms. This hustling – taking on an active role in their churches, families and communities, and aiming to put the different contradictory pieces and demands of life together to make a coherent enough whole – appeared as the antipode to being lost.

Conclusion

The urgency with which concerns are raised in public arenas and in private encounters in Acholiland about youth being 'lost' and in need of saving can be interpreted as a manifestation of what Diouf (2003) has referred to as the moral and social panic raised by the upsurge of youth in Africa to the cracks of state and society. Yet while the lost youth discourse can in part be interpreted as a moral panic, I argue that in Acholiland it is simultaneously a political discourse *about* the cracks of state and society. Acholi sub-region has some of the highest poverty, unemployment and HIV infection rates in Uganda, while the education outcomes in the sub-region are among the worst. The belief that Acholi youth are 'lost' is hence not only a discourse that serves to disempower youth and entrench gerontocratic hegemony, but an assessment of the material, social and political realities that Acholi youth face.

Stories about the lost youth of Acholi and how to restore them distil the essence of what is not working in Acholi society and in Uganda; they can thus

be viewed as political narratives that "engage the imagination, not only in constructing stories about the past and the present, but in helping to articulate a vision of an alternative world" (Andrews 2014, 87). Along similar lines, Mahmood writes:

> If the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific (both in terms of what constitutes 'change' and the means by which it is effected), then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility and effectivity. Viewed in this way, what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view, may actually be a form of agency – but one that can be understood only from within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment. (2011, 13–14)

Agency is not present only in *resistance* to norms, but in how norms are *inhabited* (ibid.). The key question is, therefore: what are the conditions under which Catholic and Protestant youth in Kitgum come to desire to submit to the recognized authority of clan elders and their churches? As I hope this chapter has shown, what is central for understanding this desire is the discourse of *lostness,* to which clan tradition and the Christian Church are seen to provide an antidote. The choice to submit made by young Catholics and Protestants in Kitgum – like those of the pious Muslim women studied by Mahmood – run counter to what she terms "a progressivist point of view" (ibid.). Yet, as I have shown, the partial submission of these young adults to the authority of the church also provides them with spaces and languages of agency which they can only dream about in the sphere of formal politics or, indeed, almost anywhere else in the context of the society they inhabit.

The discourse of 'lostness' has a deeply moralizing tone, and I think it can rightly be critiqued for denigrating and even depoliticizing the youth it labels as 'lost'. As I have shown, however, the discourse also reflects genuine concerns that elders have about the youth of their communities, and that 'notlost' young adults have about their peers. When combined with a political critique of church and clan elders who are not doing enough to enable Acholi youth to rise, or with a critique of the central state that is perpetuating the marginalization of this group in Uganda, the discourse on 'lostness' becomes a potent political tool. Furthermore, for those young adults who adopt the discourse of 'lost youth', and who create themselves in opposition to it, the discourse produces a form of agency through which they seek to constitute themselves as meaningful and constructive members of their society.

Acknowledgments

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Struggling for New Communicative Spaces: Young Media Producers and Politics in the Republic of Benin

Tilo Grätz

This contribution focuses on innovative media productions as a mode of political engagement for young people in the Republic of Benin (West Africa). The chapter explores, from a sociological perspective, the potential agency they stand to gain from their daily engagement with communication media, and argues that their popular recognition is linked both to their political credibility and their creativity as well as ability to continually forge close relationships with their audiences. Meanwhile, they are also promoting novel media genres that are triggering debates on pertinent societal issues and convey information. The careers of these young media professionals often entail a parallel process of enhancing their capacities while coping with the daily structural (censorship, low salaries) and technical challenges. The chapter[1] links up to recent studies on youth and political engagement and new media actors in sub-Saharan Africa.[2]

Changing Media and Communication Spaces in the Republic of Benin

At the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, many West African states witnessed new waves of public protests against governments in Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. In particular, the events in Burkina Faso, the rebellion that led to the demise of the semi-authoritarian regime of Compaoré,

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1 Fieldwork was carried out in Benin from November 2008 to March 2014, funded by the DFG (cf. Grätz 2014b), mainly based on social-anthropological methods of media research (Peterson 2003, Bird 2010, Grätz 2015b) including long-term field work, participant observation, in-depth interviews and media content analysis.

2 Media production in Africa has recently received more intensified scholarly attention from social and cultural anthropology as well as from African studies; see Beck and Wittmann (2004), Wasserman (2011), Grätz (2011), Gunner, Ligaga and Moyo (2011) or Krings and Reuster-Jahn (2014).

indicate the limits of facade democracies that normalized practices of corruption, clientelism and social exclusion. Most of these protests were steered by young people (in a wide sense, referring to social juniors, see below) – who constitute the focus of the present volume. Most observers argue that these are young people who are socially excluded, often not formally employed, who are not part of those elites who capitalize on positions in the state administration, traditional or religious institutions or lucrative contracts or businesses. There is much truth in this observation, but it should not lead us to overlook the fact that critical positions vis-à-vis incumbent elites are also held by many young people who may not be completely excluded socially, but who are still struggling to get a voice and create their own realm of manoeuvre within those political systems. This is the case of young media producers in the Republic of Bénin, who share an idea of independent and responsible journalism, and strive to enhance their role within Beninese society day by day. Working either as freelancers, enthusiasts or in formal positions, they represent a new generation of young media producers who are quite different from state-dependent career journalists, and all are struggling with the structural and political problems of their country. A major motivation to contribute to the present volume derives from the fact that in many such political movements on the African continent media play central roles, as tools of mobilization or to enhance new spaces of political debate, extending beyond the often cited social media. Here, young people, as I argue based on my case study, are the main force of innovation and contestation. Whether they should be seen as 'breakers' or 'makers' (see Honwana and De Boeck 2005), their position in public spaces has constantly grown and persists despite power struggles *and* economic constraints.

Actually, there are several, often competing concepts of youth in African studies. Most of these purposely relativize 'hard' facts such as biological age, biological puberty or maturity, and rather focus on social and / or political factors determining youth as a social status contingent on their particular positioning and perceptions of them by society; perspectives still differ with respect to the main criteria for the category of 'youth'. Many classical anthropological studies hint at local classifications based on age-stratification, often induced by rites of passage. These tend to be even more complex when assigning age-cohorts and age-groups that continue to structure either male or female populations in later life-stages and may also become politically relevant. A strong reference to local (emic) categories certainly represents those visions that simply distinguish non-married people from those who are married with children. Other, more sociologically minded perspectives focus on people's social positioning in society with regard, principally, to the factors

of their (limited) economic status, experience and political influence, yet endowed with creativity and capacity to change (see Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Boesen 2008; Martin, Ungruhe and Häberlein 2016). This automatically enlarges the category of 'youth' to include large cohorts of people who might even be married and starting a professional career. All of these perspectives share, nevertheless, the idea of contextualizing concepts of youth in Africa rather than simply relying on biological or statistical approaches. My own approach largely sympathizes with the more sociological perspective, asserting that, in the field of media in West Africa, the status of youth corresponds to professional 'juniors', explicitly addressed by actors themselves, which largely (though not fully) parallels differentials in social power *and* economic status. In the case of Benin, these differences between status groups (which could be sub-classified and display various modes of transition as well blurring aspects when it comes to individual cases) are further fuelled by historical development with regard to changes in the whole landscape of media especially after 1990, with new entries into the field, new business opportunities and the growing political relevance of media and its effects on public culture (developed in more detail below). My argument is twofold. Younger media professionals in Benin (based on the above mentioned criteria) share a range of features that allow me to discern their particular strengths (ambitions for renewal and breaking new ground, creativity), as well as weaknesses (daily financial as well as political compromises, social indeterminacy), and to situate these in the context of the wider debate on youth in Africa (see the introduction to this volume). Secondly, I aim at underlining the differences with more established media actors such as career journalists employed at state institutions or successful media entrepreneurs, in terms of creativity, but also precariousness of position.

Before analyzing the role of young media producers in the Republic of Benin more thoroughly, I would like to sketch the general situation of media in the country. As a former French colony, Benin gained independence as the Republic of Dahomey in 1960. The country was marked by a period of political instability with several *coups d'état* from 1960 to 1972, and a longer socialist period between 1972 and 1990, which was characterized by a dictatorial system. In 1990, a national conference opened the way for a more democratic political structure and set the stage for considerable media liberalization, terminating the monopoly of the central state and its broadcasting house ORTB (*Office de Radiodiffusion et Télévision du Bénin*); this subsequently led to new state-independent newspapers and rural radio stations (Grätz 2003). In 1997, a new media law also enabled the establishment of independent radio and TV stations (Carlos and Djogbénou 2005; Grätz 2009, 2014b). These are generally

licensed by the Supreme Media Board, *Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication* (HAAC).[3] The field of journalism and media production – including the vibrant film and video industry, and the increasing number of commercial media production companies – is ever expanding.

Investigating the social history of the media field in Benin, we may distinguish four generations (as conceptualized by Karl Mannheim 1952, see Parnes, Vedder and Willer 2008) of active contributors. The first generation comprises those media pioneers working in press houses established in colonial times, especially as part of the colonial administrative service targeting expatriate audiences. These people often came from typical literate professions, working as teachers, pastors, translators or clerks. Some of them began to publish the first independent journals on political activities during the decolonization period. The second generation is related to the expansion of the state-owned broadcasting and press system in the mid-seventies. This cohort is associated with the establishment of larger TV and radio broadcasting houses in Cotonou and regional services in Parakou (after 1983), as well as the broader nationwide distribution of the governmental press, triggering the need for a greater number of media specialists who were trained at supra-regional educational institutions abroad.[4] This generation includes journalists working as permanent state agents. The socialist period helped to enhance the corpus of journalists by extending media services, but hampered conditions for free and critical journalism against the backdrop of propaganda politics. The third generation consists of all those journalists and media professionals who emerged immediately after the political changes in 1990 and the increase in press freedom. The press sector in particular experienced a veritable boom; today there are up to 100 journals and newspapers. Members of this third generation often started their careers with one of the early independent journals, including student newspapers. Most journalists from this group, who often possess a high level of formal education, came from other fields outside journalism. They were trained on the job and / or in subsequent intensive training courses.

The fourth and contemporary generation of media professionals capitalizes on a multiplicity of emergent options in the field of media and the

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3   The last attribution of frequencies was issued in 2013.

4   A proper curriculum on journalism has been established only recently, at university level and at the private Media College ISMA (*Institut Supérieur des Métiers de l'Audiovisuel*) in Cotonou. Most active presenters and technicians, often possessing a degree in other subjects, were trained on the job, across various internships with different media, seminars and training courses offered by NGO or private institutions.

public sphere. This generation is, however, also facing growing competition, commercialization and direct political interference by the state (see below). Most of them are very young (chiefly between 18 and 40), working in private start-up media outlets and are active both in using 'classical' as well social media, above all Facebook and private blogs, to spread news about, for example, cases of abuse of state power and various public protest movements in Benin as well as in other West African countries.

Working as an emergent media professional in one of the state-independent institutions generally does not pay well. Salaries are low (between 50 and 200 Euro a month) and working conditions are bad, particularly because extra allowance is usually not provided for the production of features and the coverage of events. Consequently, many of these media professionals hold side jobs: either as MCs at private or public events, in the ad business, or as teachers or clerks at municipal offices. Technicians often run workshops at home, or offer technical assistance at private parties or public events. Many young journalists work simultaneously as presenters, journalists, technicians, DJs, editors or PR officers for several media outlets. These struggles nevertheless keep them in close touch with various potential audiences and offer them substantial insight into the daily hustle of various parts of the public that inevitably shapes their methods of producing media content. In addition, *per diem* payments from one of the numerous workshops or conferences which media professionals are often invited to as 'social multipliers', are seductive additional revenues. These are supplemented by money for expenses journalists may receive for covering a particular event, meeting, opening ceremony and so on.[5]

Individual pathways to media engagement in the media field are quite diverse. They range, for instance, from successful editors and radio presenters with impressive careers to *débrouillards* ('those muddling through') struggling as permanent interns.

Aristide Balaro, 34, finished high school and studied agriculture at the University of Abomey-Calavi. He then entered the media business through an internship at the state broadcaster ORTB and worked with the youth Radio Ado 3s, both in Cotonou. Furthermore, he was employed for a year by the newspaper Le Matinal. Subsequently, he attended a three-month media-training program offered by Ado's Canadian partner NGO, and specialized in radio production and documentary film. Today, he works simultaneously with Ado 3S, hosting two shows – a quiz show and a business magazine presenting young entrepreneurs – while also lending himself to help the station's management in training interns. In addition, he works as a freelance documentary

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5   Here entailing private / commercial, community / associative and religious broadcasters.

filmmaker for development agencies, producing, for example, a film about the work of an NGO in the farming sector or the success of artisan job training program. From time to time, he is also invited to host a magazine on ORTB TV, and he offers his editing services to producers of small home-made videos video clips of rising musicians. Finally, he produces leaflets, such as for a new private business school in Cotonou where he, in turn, may enjoy free further education in the IT field. He lives in Godomey, a blossoming trading city on the outskirts of Cotonou, and owns a pub there that he was able to establish thanks to a piece of land he inherited from his late aunt, and where his business flourishes on weekends. (Interviews in Cotonou, March 2013 and March 2014)

In some cases, young media professionals succeed in gaining a formal position at the state broadcaster ORTB where they expected a greater financial security, but are often hampered in their activities.[6]

Despite a general openness of the media system and its growing plurality, a free and bold development of media and journalism in Benin is still disadvantaged by various constraints that are limiting unhampered activity of journalists in the country. These may comprise legal-institutional and structural-economic aspects, direct and indirect modes of censorship, professional attitudes and self-censorship, and finally the general relevance of media in everyday life in Benin.

On the first level, we have to look at the conditions that enable journalists to establish media outlets. To found a newspaper is rather easy, but radio and TV stations as electronic media are licensed by the HAAC only periodically after a call for applications along with procedures for assessing the documents. This procedure is, however, not always a guarantee of success. In 2008, the HAAC was in fact already licensing various new electronic media, including local radio stations, but the Ministry of Information refused the final signature because of technical reasons. Broadcasting frequencies are, in fact, not available to an unlimited extent, but in this case, the argument was played out at a moment when the president was not in favour of radio stations run by people or groups distant to his regime.

Secondly, once a media outlet is established, its daily survival is difficult to assure. In the case of newspapers and journals, which derive their budget from sales of their publications or from subscribers only to a very limited extent, sponsors, either from political parties or individual politicians or

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6 The young TV journalist Expedit Ologoun, for example, started to present a morning show at ORTB TV, featuring political debates with studio guests. The often critical positions taken towards the government caused the program to be suspended. The current Talon government, instead, helped and promoted Ologoun to become a leading Media Director.

businesspeople, contribute to the budget (Adjovi 2003b), as well as those using the newspapers to publish advertisements. Thus, the editorial line of the periodical is often not independent from those contributing to its existence. Economic conditions incline radio and TV stations to sign contracts to program large advertising campaigns, with a side effect that news shows or political reportage must often be re-scheduled to give priority to those clients.

Censorship in Benin includes a wide array of interventions and measures designed to shape the activity of journalists, including more direct interventions, such as lawsuits against media outlets or journalists, as well as indirect strategies like intimidating phone calls or bribing critical journalists to tame their output. In this regard, the country witnessed a certain shift of modes of censorship to more indirect modes of soft censorship (Podesta 2012) especially after president Yayi Boni was in power between 2006 and 2016 (Grätz 2015).

The role of the supreme media board, HAAC (Adjovi 2003a), has been, across its different mandates, a very ambiguous one. On the one hand, it helps to increase the standards of media production and assumes a necessary watchdog position to confront media professionals over any abuses of media. On the other, it does not apply the same standards to governmental media, above all the TV department of the ORTB. In addition to that, many of its decisions seem to be quite severe and overdone, such as the closing of media outlets. Conversely, most journalists are themselves aware of the need to sanitize their profession, especially to reduce incorrect or commissioned information. Here, the journalist associations are trying to point to any abuse of media while offering training sessions and workshops to enhance the professional abilities of their colleagues.

Skills and Strategies of Media Production: The Case of Radio in Benin

In the following, I examine more precisely the activities of the young radio producers in Benin whom I was able to follow more intensively (Grätz 2014b). Radio is still the most important electronic mass media in the country. Although television is growing in its importance, with four local channels currently available, about 80 radio broadcasters are operating across the country, especially in the major urban areas such as Cotonou and Parakou. These metropolises thus offer listeners the opportunity to choose between various stations and multifaceted program schedules, including information, entertainment, advice and announcements. However, most radio stations remain underequipped, thus facing a multitude of daily challenges of a technical

(power cuts, lack of spare parts) and financial (travel funds for coverage, phone cards) nature. The competition between radio broadcasters – especially in the larger urban areas of Cotonou and Porto Novo on the coast and Parakou in the north – urges the broadcasters to develop even more compelling programs and to promote talented presenters who are able to attract many listeners. Interactive programs such as game and request shows as well as political debates (see examples below) are gaining more and more attention from listeners through increased press coverage. Thus, radio broadcasting in Benin proves to be a field of constant creativity and innovation.

On the basis of my field work data, we may discern four main factors upon which the attainment of young radio producers in Benin rests: firstly, working in an enabling environment, that is, in a radio station with less structured professional hierarchies, a large spectrum of broadcasting formats, with guidance and solidarity among colleagues and an openness to newcomers; secondly, personal creativity and skills in the development of successful genres and styles of presentations, and an apt appropriation and adaptation of media technologies; thirdly, a sensitivity to current topics and the opinions and information needs of their listeners; and finally, the maintenance of close relationships with listeners and colleagues both on and off air.

The most important aspects are certainly their skills, creativity and professional strategies. These range from informal reporting strategies to presenters' particular rhetorical styles. Some are especially skilled in employing narrative styles such as proverbs in culture-related broadcasts, and also in their personal style of talking to and chatting with listeners who frequently evaluate a presenter according to his or her unique abilities to 'talk the right way', that is, to use the appropriate local vernacular. Evaluations of correct language hinge on adeptness in discussions of politics or issues of development, on the usage of appropriate neologisms, and presenters' abilities to play with allusions. Furthermore, they need to know how to gain information when covering events or reporting from public life.

Pressure and intimidation by state authorities are the daily bread of most journalists in Benin. Often they have to struggle with direct interventions, as was the case of Berepa, a part-time journalist and teacher in the northern provincial town of Natitingou.

> Berepa, a presenter from the community Radio Nanto FM in Natitingou, was caught in the crossfire in early 2011 after inviting both a representative of the state and one from the opposition to a studio discussion that revolved around the issue of the 2011 Benin NATIONAL DAY festivities planned to take place in Natitingou. Callers complained of various

> unfinished but promised infrastructural projects, and questioned the overall non-transparent budget for the event. The studio guest Kassa Mampo, President of the *comité de développement de Natitingou* and former member of the communist party and an opponent to all political regimes since, was particularly vocal about the issue of bad municipal governance. The debate very much fuelled the ongoing discussion and rumours in town. A rally took place on one of the preceding days with participants demanding more information regarding these issues. That demonstration in May 2011 was initially forbidden and subsequently dissolved by the police – causing altercations between police forces and citizens and the death of a young man. In the course of the inquiries about this incident, Berepa and the station's director were called to report at the police station. They were issued a warning to avoid giving voice to oppositional positions. Simultaneously, Kassa Mampo was arrested and accused of being the principal instigator of the turmoil; he remains in jail. (Interview in Natitingou, March 2012).

Young radio journalists and presenters try to avoid defamations, false allegations and rumour-mongering as much as possible in their productions. They try, however, always to enhance their room to manoeuvre in promoting critical debates and information. Most radio presenters usually maintain a large network of friends and acquaintances and use these connections to improve their shows by adding relevant information and news, or to gain access to interesting studio guests. In some cases, journalists prefer to keep their information at a semi-official or informal level, in order to retain the potential to publish it at an appropriate moment. An important aspect is the ability to cope with technological challenges caused by inappropriate or defective devices, power cuts or climatic conditions.

The competition between radio stations, but also the desire to reach a larger audience and to convey political information, encourages a number of young radio presenters to develop new broadcasting formats: for example, inciting listeners to intervene in political debates. These may revolve around particular topics, or feature discussions with an eminent studio guest. People may phone in to convey their opinion or discuss the guest. This is especially the case with political talk shows, which are usually aired on Friday night or Sunday morning. Meanwhile, similar interactive debates are offered nationwide and in different languages. The most prominent shows of this type often become the topic of press coverage thereafter.

Another example is a type of radio program called *grogne*. Almost all radio listeners in Benin associate this term, which means 'expressing anger', with

call-in radio shows that enable listeners to freely and directly discuss almost any current life issue. Consequently, frequent callers to these shows are named *grogneurs* or *faiseurs d'opinion* by journalists and politicians. The mainly young *grogneurs* and the journalists hosting such shows contribute greatly to daily media production in Benin, constituting novel communicative spaces across different networks of actors and social spheres. *Grogne* shows got their designation from the very first of similar shows introduced by Golfe FM, called Grogne Matinal (morning anger), which is still broadcast by the station on weekdays. Callers may complain about any current problems in public and political life, bad experiences with institutions and authorities, but also voice critical statements with regard to the radio programme. Usually, every caller has about 90 seconds at his or her disposal. It is quite an illustrious type of show, listened to by both citizens and politicians, and has been adopted by several radio stations across the country. Callers that manage to get through to these mostly morning programs may address many topics, voice critical statements on daily problems and also discuss societal scandals. In most cases, the hosts of the show will not intervene or comment upon these statements, but have to emphasize the necessity that callers avoid any kind of defamation or false accusations, and the direct naming of persons. This successful format is primarily based on the contingent interests of radio producers and frequent listeners, and corresponds to current changes in the public sphere where these shows find their particular place – an innovative opening of media space for very instantaneous and hot local issues – and, to a lesser degree, due to the facts and issues themselves. Here, we may witness an unprecedented and (in most official media institutions) very much unparalleled genre promoted by young media producers, enabling the circulation of novel media content, thus giving rise to a unique instance of societal discourse.

A central concern for many in the field of media – and especially for media authorities such as the HAAC – has, almost inevitably, become that of the veracity of individual statements. Furthermore, debates have arisen around methods of avoiding abuse, addressing potential slander and simultaneously guaranteeing the freedom of expression of the callers, and the right of others to refute their statements. These shows have often been suspended by the HAAC but later resumed because of listeners' and media professionals' protests. Currently, debates continue to rage around the potential political misuses of such shows. The HAAC, together with representatives of journalists and media owners, decided in 2005 to interrupt these potentially politically charged radio programmes during periods of election campaigns (starting with the presidential elections in early 2006), in order to avoid misuse by individual politicians. Because of similar derogatory statements, most hosts of

grogne programmes now introduce each broadcast with a reminder on the etiquette and structure, and urge listeners not to make personal aspersions. Many *grogneurs*' statements focus on local issues, especially problems with infrastructures in their neighbourhood, where local authorities are called upon to monitor and finalize public projects more effectively. Some few *grogneurs* have abused these possibilities, but generally the *grogne* format does reside in the particular interplay of more formal and informal avenues of communication (Grätz 2014c).

Another quite telling example of a new media genre promoted by young media professionals was the success of a political comedy production performed by a group of young people hosted by Radio Planète in Cotonou under the title *Bébête infos* in which politicians and other personalities were imitated, in particular the President Kérékou and his political friends before 2006. It was successfully sold as a cassette series and later appeared on CD. Several young radio presenters (capitalizing on previous experiences in high school theatre companies) and the young station director, Yahouédéhou, who all also assumed roles in recording the show, prepared the scripts.

Finally, the acknowledgement of young radio producers in Benin depends on their day-to-day relationships with their active audiences, and a mutual closeness they may develop both in the physical and virtual world. With regards to the first aspect, people often recognize them in public, greet them, share their observations and critiques on the station's programs, may sometimes invite radio personalities for a chat over a beer, or even to a private party at home. Conversely, radio professionals rely on their intense contacts to the listeners when recruiting studio guests or when collecting background information for news coverage. Young radio presenters of one of the new independent and community broadcasters are especially likely to engage in constant interactions with their audiences through their presence at local events, when reporting live or interviewing people … or by feedings news to WhatsApp groups. Many presenters are supported by show-specific fan-clubs that often provide them with critical assistance and even financial help. Some of the younger, enthusiastic members of these clubs may one day eventually become radio producers themselves, after internships and the improvement of their talents.

To meet the expectations of their listeners, most young radio personalities purposely try to offer a wide range of very practical information. This does not only include health advice, announcements regarding public or personal events, services such as lost and found announcements, press reviews in several languages, and overviews on commodity prices, but also expands to include job offers that may even constitute the central topic of a whole program (e.g. *Planète Emploi*, Radio Planète, Cotonou) and services dealing with lost children.

As I have argued earlier, media-induced closeness is not only the result of a cultural and spatial proximity of radio production; individuals relate through the personal, intimate experience of listening to the radio. In this regard, interactive radio shows in particular may establish direct contacts between presenters and listeners. Encouraged by the boom in mobile phone usage and call-in shows such as *grogne matinal*, quiz and request shows are gaining in popularity. A very successful type of show is a call-in format discussing personal and intimate problems that addresses very sensitive issues like love, jealousy, adultery, divorce, infertility and conflicts between generations (see Grätz 2014a). The success of these programs accompanied the proliferation of independent radio stations.

It is primarily the new generation of radio presenters that is able to produce these programs that are very relevant to the advance of society, with an appeal to listeners. Despite their fragmented periods of job training, this nascent generation keeps content riveting without succumbing to the superficial or sensational, engaging in radio production both as a vocation and with a pleasure that guarantees their success. The appropriation of radio technology should thus be seen as a dialogic process between listeners and producers that blurs boundaries between these categories, especially during call-in shows. The main actors in these technological dramas are skilled young media professionals, particularly the currently rising radio journalists, acting as new cultural creators, that is, as mediators and translators at the interface of different realms of interest.

Working as a young media producer may be one moment in life that is simultaneously filled with changes and options, but also with compromises and haphazard situations. The fact that a job in the media field is rarely well-paid may contribute to the tarnished reputation of the profession. In this respect, the young generation of media professionals shares a similar position when compared to other educated urban young adults with precarious yet diverse job opportunities, revenues and activities. Young emergent media professionals in West Africa are striving to find new avenues for public communication. Competing with each other for public attention, they feature, nevertheless, a high degree of solidarity, especially when it comes to the exchange of news and job opportunities.

Conclusion

My account focused on young media producers in the Republic of Benin who have contributed to the creation of new communication spaces in that

country, especially in flourishing urban areas. They definitely do not form part of a so-called "lost generation" (Cruise O'Brien 1996), but rather represent a new generation (in the cultural sense of the term) of dynamic youth in Africa.[7] These rising media professionals, emerging in the context of growing media liberalization, strive for political engagement *and* a renowned position in Beninese society, rather than a straightforward career. They are compelled to make use of a variety of sources of communication to be innovative and creative in order to sustain their achievements (see also Bird 2010). A successful engagement with media translates into an increase in overall personal options and life chances also beyond the media field.

My case study underlines a process in which today's youth in Africa may both fall under the constraints of a liberalized, volatile economy, yet creatively seize some of its opportunities to gain recognition and enhance their political commitment. Young media professionals in Benin are part of an aspiring, still precariously situated urban youth who appropriate public spaces in constructing new realms of political agency.

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7 See Diouf (2003); Diouf and Collignon (2001); Abbink and Kessel (2005); Biaya (2005); Honwana and de Boeck (2005); Boesen (2008); Sommers (2010); Ntarangwi and Massart (2015); Ugor and Mawuko-Yevugah (2015).

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Transnational Engagement: Return Migrant Women in Somaliland

Mariko Sato

Introduction – Touching upon Return Migration

Amina, 23, was born in the countryside in Somaliland, but grew up in the United Kingdom, living with her aunt and other close relatives since her mother had passed away when she was young and her father had moved to Saudi Arabia for work. She had dreamt of returning to Somaliland for many years in order to reconnect with her country of birth and relatives still living there, with whom she and her family had remained in close contact over the years, mostly through phone calls and remitting financial support on a monthly basis. She wished to see her little cousins in Somaliland to whom she had sent money for dentist appointments, school uniforms and other necessities. Finally, in 2012, she returned to Somaliland on her own after graduating from college, leaving her family back in Europe.

> I thought that returning is easy, since these are my people, this is my culture and language. But it's not so easy to be a young woman here; they don't always want to hear you, or even see you. And [at] the same time, everybody sees you and everything you do, and you get easily criticized by the people. It's tough sometimes. I want to make a change. I want to show everybody that a young Somali woman can do everything; she can do business, she can be in politics. We need that too. I plan to open a business soon, importing clothes and things. There's great opportunities here for people like me.

Return migration has become a keen subject of interest, not only in migration studies but in development studies and international relations alike. The focus has mainly been on return migrant contributions to development and peacebuilding. More recently there has been an increased interest in the complex relationship between return migration and conflicts, with notions of return migration in some cases promoting peace and in other instances adding to local tensions and conflict (see Laakso and Hautaniemi 2014; Kleist and Vammen 2012; Vertovec 2009).

The real-life experiences of return migrants have been a lesser point of academic interest, partly due to the long-lived assumption that return migration is a simple act of 'going home' – that upon repatriation the return migrants simply pick up their lives from where they left them prior to emigrating (Van Houte and Davids 2008, 1411; Nyberg-Sørensen, Van Hear and Poul Engberg-Pedersen 2002, 15). This assumption of an uncomplicated and simple act does not take into account the complex nature of return – not only for the individual returning, but also the returnee's familial and social network, as well as the wider community and society.

These overly simplified and straightforward notions have also framed return migration as a largely local process with little reference to transnational social, economic, political or cultural spheres. However, in more recent academic research, return migration has been shown to be an essentially *transnational* practice (Hansen 2013, 145). Diaspora members and migrants in general tend to take part in a multitude of familial, social, economic, religious, political and cultural processes that span national and cultural divides (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, 130). The Somalilander diaspora is spread across the globe and an individual family might have members on several continents. Despite great distances, familial connections are often close-knit and work as comprehensive support networks for members which are rarely cut off upon return migration. On the contrary, they may become invaluable resources for return migrants when settling into their new surroundings, in finding a home, employment and starting up their social life (Hautaniemi, Juntunen and Sato 2013).

This chapter takes a closer look at one particular group of voluntary[1] return migrants – young professional Somalilander women – and the ways in which these returnees seek to open new social space for themselves in order to be able to take on active economic, political and social roles in their community and in society at large. In other words, this chapter seeks to map out the ways in which young return migrant women situate themselves in their community of return and what kind of agency are they able to claim for themselves through these positionings. The practices of return are often transnational in nature as the returnees pool their economic and social resources from their transnational networks to support their aspirations. Since these practices can often involve breaking with established norms and praxes, and even active resistance, they can cause societal frictions with a potential for opening new spaces of agency for other groups in the community as well. These can include the local youth and women, in particular.

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1   As opposed to involuntary or forced return, that is not undertaken by the individual voluntarily.

This chapter is based on a seven-month ethnographic field research period in Somaliland in 2012, which included 24 interviews with a total of 28 interlocutors. The interviews comprised both individual and group interviews with different groups of return migrants and locals alike (Sato 2013). This research material has been further complemented with the author's participation in two subsequent projects, the European Return Fund research project 'Return migration to Somalia and Iraq' (Hautaniemi, Juntunen and Sato 2013), and the book project 'Diasporas, Peacebuilding and Development in the Horn of Africa' (Laakso and Hautaniemi, 2014), as well as interview material from a commissioned study conducted for the International Solidarity Fund (ISF) in fall 2014 (Sato and Hussein 2014).

A Land of Opportunities and Deep Divisions

The return of young Somaliland women today is taking place in a highly transnationalized society undergoing rapid economic, social and political change. Somaliland, the self-declared and unrecognized state in North-western Somalia has enjoyed relative peace and stability over the past two decades despite the prolonged civil war and conflict experienced in other parts of Somalia (Hautaniemi, Juntunen and Sato 2013; Lewis 2008). Somaliland is also a society highly influenced by migration – emigration and return migration – both socially and economically. The economy of Somaliland is highly dependent on diaspora remittances, which comprise up to 40 per cent of the annual income of urban households, and diaspora contributions to many basic services such as education, electricity, health care, garbage collection and telephone services (IBRD 2012, 44).

While the government has been relatively successful in fostering security and stable administration in a volatile region, the society suffers from social tensions, stark inequalities on different levels and hindrances to economic development. These on-going dynamics can be seen in the long-term breakdown of social cohesion and with "the differences between genders, classes and population groups diversifying into multifaceted and unequal social relationships" (Hautaniemi, Juntunen and Sato 2013, 53). The youth of Somaliland, and especially young women, still have a somewhat narrow space for social agency. Until quite recently women, especially young women, have had very few ascribed roles in public and institutional life within the society. Nowadays there are some female public figures, but nearly all of them are older women.

In the context of Somaliland, 'youth' does not necessarily refer to a legally under-aged person as one is generally considered to be part of the category until marriage which is the main signifier of adulthood in Somaliland; once

married both men and women take on new familial and public roles accompanied by different rights, entitlements and responsibilities. Therefore, youth in Somaliland incorporates a large number of people who may already have a degree and can be working professionals, but who lack many of the public roles and opportunities they may have learned to associate with adulthood while living in the diaspora (see Hautaniemi, Juntunen and Sato 2013).

The In-betweeners

Previously, most return migrants in Somaliland have been older men (Hansen 2008), but nowadays there are an increasing number of young migrant women returning as well. The diaspora and return migrants are vital for the national economy and return migrants form the highly visible social and political elite of the society (see Hautaniemi et al. 2013; Hansen 2008). They are closely involved in local politics, hold many central positions and lead the some of the largest local businesses. Those belonging to the younger generation of return migrants have largely built up their expectations and subsequent strategies for return based on these experiences of former returnees. Young professional women return for various reasons: they wish to gain work experience, to reconnect with their former homeland and relatives, and to contribute to the state-building process in Somaliland. Often return is motivated by a combination of all of the above-mentioned reasons.

Many of these young returnees may find professional success upon return, but they also struggle to find their place within the society and to become accepted by locals who often view them as 'too Westernized' or as 'outsiders' of sorts – leading the return migrants to find themselves in the anomalous position of being an insider and an outsider at the same time. They speak the language and have valued the Somali culture in the diaspora, but are still perceived as foreign and strange. Their positioning in the community is further juxtaposed by their transnational links, professionalism and resources, which position them at the top of the society as privileged members of the elite, while their perceived outlandishness can push them to the bottom of the community, with their being seen as having 'abandoned their culture' or not being 'proper Muslims'. It is telling that even those return migrants who resettled in Somaliland *years* ago and have built their lives there are generally referred to as 'diaspora' by both locals and other returnees.

> When I came here, I couldn't understand why the women were so horrible to me, why people were so mean to me, but [now] I understand perfectly well. They look at me and they think, 'You're the one that got

away; you're the one that had the options, the alternatives, and still has [them], and you want to come here and work and get a job. You'll get paid more in a month than I do in a year. You're just rubbing it in our face, the fact that you can fly out at any time. Why are you here? To mock us?'

Being an 'in-betweener' is a highly precarious position for these young Somali returnee women. The strong urge they felt to prove to themselves and to others that they do indeed belong in Somaliland was also reflected in how they expressed themselves in interviews: it often required several informal discussions before they were able to discuss the hardships and prejudices they had experienced. Initially many wanted to emphasize their contributions to the society and to the development of the local community through their business and involvement with charities, rather than talk about how they were shunned by locals and found it difficult to find any local non-diaspora friends. Indeed, many return migrants exclusively socialize with other return migrants and expats working in the development aid sector and mainly visited 'diaspora' cafes and restaurants, which were owned and mostly frequented by other return migrants and visiting diaspora members. Gaining the trust of these 'in-betweeners' was a long-term engagement, but once attained the interviewees were willing to share in-depth insights into their, at times difficult and trying, experiences as return migrants.

The Returnee's Burden to 'Bring Development'

Another contradiction experienced by the returnees was related to the expectations they faced from the local community. The local community in Somaliland often holds high expectations of return migrants in terms of financial assistance to family members, support for charities, job creation and contributions to development. Many young return migrant women find these, at times unrealistic expectations, personally exasperating, as they experience difficulties in meeting the demands of relatives and the local community.

Return migrants are expected to 'bring something back' to the community, not to return 'empty-handed'. They are expected first and foremost to financially support their family and extended network of relatives – to invest in their cousin's business idea and help their friend build a house for his mother. Overall, the return migrants are all thought to be well-educated with a lot of work experience, and therefore to have something to contribute (Hansen 2008, 1118). For young female returnees fresh out of college or their first jobs in the

diaspora, the situation was quite different from that of many of the previous returnees, especially the older male returnees, who might be better connected locally and might have more savings to return with. This was not usually the case for younger female returnees, who might have arrived with just one suitcase and their professional degree, holding high hopes of being able to utilize their Western education for the good of Somaliland and their own careers. Not being able to contribute financially to the local community immediately upon return already put them in a disadvantaged position in the eyes of many locals. Local relatives might say that they should have stayed in the diaspora, at least then they would have been able to contribute to the wellbeing of the extended family by remitting financial support.

Practices of Resistance and Disruptive Processes

> I used to ask my family, 'How do they know I'm not from here?'; and they said, 'It's your walk'; because I don't stare at people, I just go straight to where I'm going; I don't give a lot of eye contact. So, no matter how much you try to look like them or act like them, they will always spot you out, regardless. So it's difficult.

Extensive re-assimilation or reintegration is usually not even an option for the young return migrant women, as they deviate from the local norms not only in terms of behaviour, attitudes and practices, but also physically, such as in gestures, speech and clothing. Commonly, return migrant women are recognized on the street by their way of walking or dress alone and are at times subjected to public heckling. Many young return migrant women felt that they stand apart from return migrant men, or older female returnees, and felt that it was not as easy for them to re-assimilate into Somaliland society and, for instance, to take on established gender roles. Of course, no form of return migration should be overly simplified, and it should not be assumed that return migration is a straightforward process for men or older women either.

Despite experienced difficulties, many young professional returnee women have become successful in working life, where they are often employed in INGOs, as entrepreneurs or as CEOs of their own NGOs. And despite experiencing the status of 'an outsider' to some extent, they do experience differing degrees of belonging as well, although this belonging is often *transnational* in nature (see De Bree et al. 2010). They may have a fragmented sense of belonging – and not belonging – to several places simultaneously. One returnee

described how she feels more like a Somalilander when she visits her previous home in the United Kingdom and more like Brit when she is in Somaliland. She described herself as being "sometimes a Brit and sometimes a Somalilander and sometimes something in between".

This notion of transnational belonging and experienced difficulties in re-integrating forces the returnee women to employ alternative ways of finding their place within the society – ways that do not require them to give up their established self-identifications. As this means going against some norms and traditional practices, these women's attempts to find their place in society can lead them to either willingly or unwillingly take up practices of resistance. For instance, by using her transnational networks to find a high-paying job with a UN agency, which subsequently makes her a supervisor or boss to local male employees, a young woman might challenge traditional gender roles. Similarly, by renting a house from a diaspora friend, she might be able to live in a house alone, something traditionally unheard-of for unmarried women in Somaliland. Indeed, return migrant women often make use of their transnational resources, be they social or economic, to make their way in society.

These practices of resistance are by no means always successful – a woman can become completely rejected by local employees at the workplace, or be forced to move due to being constantly jeered at by neighbours and regarded as a prostitute just for living alone – but slowly return migrant women have also been able to open new spaces for agency. Some women also express this as an outspoken goal for their stay in Somaliland. They have been especially successful as entrepreneurs and revitalizers of the Somali culture by organizing book fairs and other popular cultural events. While these practices are not necessarily intentionally transformative in nature, they can nevertheless have wider ramifications as they challenge established social structures, including gender, class / clan and generational as well as familial relations (see Guarnizo 1997). For the local youth, return migrant women are somewhat contentious and contradictory figures as they are simultaneously despised, admired, coveted, emulated and envied. As return migration of young women becomes more and more common and the lives of these women begin to intersect more often with local youth and the community at large, the consequences of these practices of resistance and frictional processes may become more evident and consequential.

Modern Change-making or Opportunistic Tribalism?

While most return migrants tend to emphasize that they do not identify strongly with clan and tribe, and with many young return migrants claiming

to consider the whole clan system to be 'outdated' and 'unnecessary', the realities are often experienced differently on the ground. The clan system is still of importance in Somalia in general, and especially so in Somaliland, which has traditionally had stronger pastoral-clan ties compared to the more sedentarily inclined South-Central Somalia (Lewis 2008).

Many of the interviewed young return migrant women stated that they were not interested in tribalism. They explained that, coming from abroad with education and knowledge, they represented modern and democratic thinking, and expressed the desire to educate the locals to leave tribalism behind and to focus on merit and professionalism instead. A common narrative among young women was that upon arrival in Somaliland they had planned to keep their clan-identity a complete secret from everyone so as not to support the clan system. As one returnee woman said:

> Once I came here, everybody kept asking me all the time: what is your clan, what is your clan? And I would never tell them; I kept that a secret; I did not want to tell [them]. But they would keep asking, always asking the same thing: what is your clan? When I would not tell them, they would try to guess and to ask other people who know me. I didn't want to tell, even though I am of a dominant clan here. But of course eventually they found it out somewhere. They always do. And when they did, they came to tell me: oh you are my sister, or: yes, I am your brother. They always find out, there is no way to hide [your] clan here.

At the same time, despite being critical of the local clan-based social system, many young return migrant women also rely on their clan networks to provide them with support. The same practice is common among all return migrant groups. Though none of the interviewed young return migrant women initially offered this information, it became clear that many, though not all, had had to rely on their clan relations to find employment or had used their familial connections to help their business or NGO. One explained how she had tried for months to find a job in one of the ministries but could not even manage to get a job interview. After trying on her own, she contacted an older male relative living abroad. The minister heading the ministry in question happened to belong to the same sub-clan as she did, and soon after she had contacted her relative, she managed to secure a position at the ministry – with no job interview required. She stated that she had not initially wanted to use her connections, which she knew would land her the job, but had wanted to get the job based on her merits. Since this had turned out to be impossible, and on her own she could not manage to meet the minister to explain her qualifications, she had relied on her transnational familial network instead. In her interview she did

not bring up the topic of how she found her job, and initially would have rather passed on the subject completely once it came up after several detailed questions about her job searching phase.

Another return migrant woman has a successful 'bag business' in Hargeisa, a popular type of import concern among Somalilander return migrants, especially women. They are usually clothing or accessories stores in which the merchandise is imported from Dubai or London by the owner on a small scale, sometimes even in suitcases. Hence the local name of 'bag businesses' for these kinds of enterprises. This type of import business highlights the transnational nature of the lives of return migrants as the owners tend to use their international connections to find goods and travel abroad regularly to stock their stores. They sell fashionable Dubai-made *abaya* dresses, make-up, perfume, scarves and the like. The owner of this particular 'bag business' store admitted, after discussing the ins-and-outs of her business, that the most important pre-requisite for her success had been that members of her clan are in control of the harbour in the port town of Berbera. This meant that she could import her goods swiftly and very inexpensively, and this gave her an edge over her competition among the local clothing stores. Others might have to pay high bribes or wait long periods of time for their merchandise to be processed at the harbour customs.

The kind of 'tribal nepotism' described in the two cases above, is without a doubt commonplace in Somaliland, which is traditionally more clan-centred than the South-Central parts of Somalia (Lewis 2008). Interviewed locals explained that unless they know to which clan a newcomer returnee belongs, they feel that they cannot trust them or 'really get to know them'. So while many young return migrant women wanted to find their place in the society based on their professionalism and other merits, they found themselves unable to do so. Instead they had to rely on their tribal, often transnational networks, to secure positions and opportunities. In doing so, they had to admit to the act of 'practicing clan', so-called, (see Lykke 2010, 73) for their own benefit, thereby reinforcing rather than renegotiating these social meanings.

Reluctant and Reactionary Revolutionaries?

Return migrants in Somaliland, young and old, men and women, stated that return migration is easiest for older men and most difficult for young women. According to them, older men usually found it relatively easy to find a 'natural' place within the community and society. They were perceived as being more easily accepted professionally, their international experience was valued, and they were seen to bring contributions to the community. This is, of course, a

simplification of sorts, as not all return migrant men were successful in their repatriation at all, but it was, nevertheless, how many young return migrant women felt.

> Old returnees are known or maybe their father was famous to the community and has social status so they reintegrate in the community, but for us as young generation we face a lot of problems; we have to prove ourselves.

What is interesting here is the generational gap, the difference in perceived reception between older and younger return migrant women. Older women often returned with their families, or having left their adult children abroad to finish their studies or start their careers, and were therefore seen by locals to have returned for all the 'right reasons': to reconnect and assist relatives, to help local charities and to be motivated to become a 'real' Somalilander again after having spent years abroad. The young professional return migrant women, on the other hand, were frequently remarked to be 'selfish' in their motivations for return. Young returnees recounted that locals claimed they were in direct competition with them for higher-paying jobs, were not interested in assimilating into local customs and held on too tightly to their 'foreign ways'.

At the same time though, while the local youth may see return migrant women as competition in the job market and they may be chastised for 'not being good Muslims', they are also idolized, emulated and envied by local young people, and are also perceived as 'modern', 'international' and 'forward-thinking'. Many of the local youth wish to associate themselves with the 'diaspora lifestyle' – emulating return migrant women down to the dress style and way of talking, both easily recognizable among locals. Some return migrants have capitalized on this and cater to their needs by setting up boutiques with distinct 'diaspora fashion'. This admiration and emulation does not stop at the surface – many young locals become interested in other issues perceived as being 'diaspora' as well, such as women's careerism, women's rights and the right to participate in public life. How deep this influence may be or become is not yet clear, but it is apparent that it is not just people who move transnationally; ideas and attitudes move along with them.

Engagement as the Political

The transformative potential of young women's return migration to Somaliland remains an open question, but it is clear that the practice does hold a possibility

for change – and not only for the gender order, but other social orders and hegemonic practices as well. Increasingly, many young Somali diaspora women are showing an interest in the idea of return and, in fact, many are already returning or practicing 'circular return'. Whatever the potential there may be in this quite commonly circular type of movement of young, professional and socially engaged women, it seems to be emerging within the transnational sphere.

The ability of these women to utilize different economic, cultural, familial and social networks and resources is rather extraordinary. While almost all voluntary return migrants in Somaliland seem to possess and make use of their networks to some extent, it is the resourcefulness of these women in seizing opportunities in every direction that is remarkable. They not only go to where the opportunities and resources lie, but they also work actively to transform and move transnational resources to their benefit, to wherever they choose to live and work – and in doing so, create new opportunities and openings for others as well. This simultaneous engagement with the local and the transnational, bridging the two, is an interesting avenue of activities of these transnational actors. By acting when and where they can, in NGO's, businesses and cultural affairs, these women are forging 'political niches' in the un-political, and expanding local views on roles and agency.

At the same time though, many young return migrant women also rely on traditional tribal networks to find opportunities. While many of them criticize tribalism as an 'outdated system from the past', they may at the same time take advantage of it, like any other resource at hand, to gain positions through arrangements that they themselves categorize as nepotistic tribalism. In making use of these clan networks, they could be seen to be enforcing the very structures they often claim to oppose.

Some return migrants are not as critical towards the clan system to begin with, and may view criticism of it as Western cultural imperialism or a lack of understanding of how tribalism can provide social protection for some vulnerable groups. All in all, though, the great majority of the returnees interviewed by the author discussed the clan system with a rather critical undertone. The returnee women do not have the luxury of choosing how they are perceived by locals. When looking for a job, does the young woman emphasize her education or mobilize clan networks to obtain employment? Do employers see her first and foremost as a woman, a returning diaspora member, a member of an important clan, or something else? Or perhaps all of these simultaneously? Does she herself identify with and solidify these categories, or try to (re)negotiate their social meanings?

Overall, what is not clear is whether return migrant engagements will continue to expand and grow in the future, as many of these women do

become frustrated with the limited options of operating outside the socially assigned avenues of the third sector, often under the auspices of international actors. One could question whether such engagement has real meaning, if it does not provide women with a validation more official in nature. As long as women hold very few posts in official politics, governance or religion, can one talk about full participation? Certainly many young return migrant women would say no, they are still a far cry from full participation in public life.

The feelings experienced by the returnees of constantly 'fighting against the odds', leads many to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Of all the return migrant women interviewed by the author, none claimed to have a plan to stay in Somaliland permanently, even though many stated that to have been their original goal prior to or directly upon return. Some wanted to leave completely, while others wished to find their own way of moving circularly between Somaliland and another country or countries. Some returnees stayed for a longer period of time, even several years, while other re-emigrated after being in Somaliland for only a month or a few. Only one interviewed returnee woman offered not being able to find employment as her primary reason for wanting to re-emigrate. Others gave reasons such as 'not being able to change anything', 'feeling tired of always being diaspora', 'feeling frustrated and angry all the time' or 'having nothing beside work here'. One professional return migrant in her twenties fantasized bringing about change by starting a Facebook campaign for women's mass return:

> I want to have thousands and thousands of Diaspora women return to Somaliland on the exact same day, for all of them to show up at Egal [airport in Hargeisa, Somaliland]. They will be smart women, doctors, lawyers, business people, everything. All of them arriving at the same time. So then they won't be able to ignore us, even if they wanted to, because then we won't be just like a needle in a hay stack, we will be the hay stack too, you see.

Amina, the returnee from United Kingdom in her twenties, who was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, came to the same conclusion as the other interviewed returnees. Despite originally having high hopes for her return, she decided not to stay in Somaliland permanently. She was, however, able to set up a successful business of her own in Hargeisa, and had grown closer to her local relatives. She also had many friends in the returnee-diaspora circle, but was unable to befriend locals. She expressed feeling disappointed about having to 'represent the diaspora' on a daily basis, and would have preferred to represent herself instead.

Indeed, it seems that though in our transnational and globalized world people may move with increased freedom and transform their multiple identities with amazing flexibility as they cross borders, external labels or identification marks are still given easily. Negotiating these externally assigned labels, such as 'outsider' or 'diaspora', might be quite a task, or even a burden, for an individual returnee, but each negotiation may have at least a micro-level effect on social norms and praxes. The labels related to clan and tribalism seem to be tied especially tight in Somaliland, and there is less space to negotiate these as they are also closely related to different entitlements, power and responsibilities. However, even these are by no means unchanging in nature and naturally evolve along with the people and the communities.

Time will show whether young women's return migration will fulfil the transformational potential that is visible as of now. One might easily suggest that since the experienced difficulties are pushing the returnee women to either re-emigrate or take on circular migration, there is no meaningful or lasting effect from their perhaps temporary return. And yet, incremental change is already taking place. The local community, especially the youth and women, are influenced by the returnees. Moreover, Somaliland society at large is affected by their activities. New business models have sprouted, cultural life has been reinvigorated and civil society revitalized.

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PART 3

Embeddedness

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Salafi Youth on Campus in Niamey, Niger: Moral Motives, Political Ends

Abdoulaye Sounaye

In a conversation about current religious practice on the campus of Abdou Moumouni University (Université Abdou Moumouni, UAM), Niamey, Niger,[1] a colleague of mine, addressing a former classmate, asked, "Do you remember when we were in high school [Lycée] in Tahoua, how many of us were practicing Muslims? Please, tell them: who was going to the mosque at that time?" As the other man hesitated, my colleague continued, "Almost nobody; we didn't even have a proper mosque, just a corner delineated by some gravel next to the dorms. And let me tell you: those who ventured to pray, we teased and made fun of them. We 'lynched' them when they came back from the mosque."[2]

Today, based on the number of students who flock to campus mosques during daily prayers, Islam-related posters and announcements that jam posting-boards and the circulation of Islamic pamphlets among female students, those times of unreligious students are long time gone. Welcome to the religion-conscious student and the Salafi activist! In fact, one may need a few days to realize the reversal in the roles my colleague evokes above, but only a few hours to grasp the significance of Islamic revival in an arena that was until recently the training ground for many Marxist-Leninists, in particular those who ran the student organization (USN, Union des Scolaires Nigériens) before they went on to lead political parties and civil society organizations. Obviously the dominant ideology on campus through the 1990s, Marxism-Leninism has been slowly outplayed by Islamic activism, following what I would call the religious turn that has transformed campus politics and the moral economy of Nigerien society as a whole.

That young people schooled in Western educational institutions were not religious was simply a cliché that ran deep in the popular imagination of *Yan Boko* (Western educated, in Hausa) and was widespread in this former French colony where the school system as a moral fabric, the state institutions and the political regime, are still heavily influenced by French moral and political

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1 UAM from now on.

2 NB: I use nicknames to insure the privacy of my interlocutors.

philosophy. The separation between state and religion, the prohibition of religious political parties and of religious education in the public school system, are some of the features of this secularism.[3] Because the public school system is grounded in a French republicanism that posits a radical secularism (*laïcité*), for many reasons the idea of a young student engaging in religious practice was simply out of the ordinary and, in many contexts, not only unexpected but also paradoxical. Heirs and products of this political philosophy, university students were naturally viewed as the vanguards of this moral order which gave little room to religiosity and subordinated religion to the state.

This chapter examines Salafism at UAM, focusing on the *Association des étudiants musulmans du Niger à l'université abdou moumouni de Niamey* (AEMN/UAM) the main Islamic organization on campus. It draws on a series of conversations conducted and observations made from 2013 to 2015. Salafism is defined here as a practice that models religiosity along the lines of Muhammad and the pious ancestors (*Salaf*) (Thurston 2016; Lauzière 2015; Sounaye 2015; Marks 2013; Pall 2013; Østebø 2011; Meijer 2009), and emphasizes a ritual purity that rests on the imperative to ground Islamic practice in an absolute monotheism (*tawhid*). In its local manifestation, it rejects the mysticism and esoterism generally associated with the Sufi organizations (*tariqa*), but also local customs and practices (*al adu*) including divination and the use of charms or talismans. It equates those practices with unlawful innovations (*bid'a*) and polytheism (*shirk*) of which a true Muslim society should rid itself. In the last two decades, these claims of authenticity have become appealing to many, in particular schooled youth among whom Salafi rationalism and emancipatory discourse have recruited some of its most committed supporters.

As a religious trend and a social movement, Salafism became popular in Niger only recently. Three major factors played into the development: Saudi initiatives in Islamic learning and *da'wa* (proselytizing) especially through The World Assembly of Muslim Youth and the Muslim World League; the influence of Northern Nigeria where Salafism has become a major force; and the social roles the graduates of the University of Medina took on upon their return to Niger. The intellectual and theological genealogies of the Salafi discourse in Niger and on the UAM campus in particular, go back to the ideas and positions of scholars such as Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780–855), founder of one of the four main legal schools in Islam, Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) and Abd al Wahab (1703–1792).[4] The last two have proved popular anti-Sufi scholars who have

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3   For a discussion on Islam and *laïcité* in Niger, see Sounaye 2009b.

4   Recent conversations I had with some students suggest also a growing influence of Tariq Ramadan whose publications are used to promote a modernist salafism, so to speak.

inspired Islamic reform across West Africa in part with Saudi support channelled through a local elite eager to counter Sufism and the influence of secular ideologies in particular *laïcité* and Marxism-Leninism. In general, Salafism has empowered young people to lay the ground for appropriations that, on the one hand, transcend generational, ethnic and class divides and, on the other, promote religious self-consciousness,[5] self-making and assertive attitudes (Sounaye 2012).

How do young Salafi implement their idea of a Muslim student? What initiatives have they taken? What do these initiatives say about their aspirations to transform public religiosities? How does this activism translate beyond the campus? These are questions that anyone familiar with the UAM campus even a decade ago would certainly be asking today as she or he tries to make sense of the ways in which Salafi discourse, spaces and subjects are socially produced. The chapter also highlights the processes through which students' social engineering takes over all other ideologies – religious or not – and redefines the modes of socialization and formation of elites. To echo a point that has been regularly made, "youths are neither universally manipulated nor passive actors in a world designed by others but individuals who are trying to chart their own course" (Abbink and Kessel 2004, 9). In that sense, the students on whom I focus are not confined to waiting, but are clearly engaged in a social movement for which religiosity becomes a moral resource and a political asset.

Scholars have used many metaphors and vied, with conceptual imagination, to describe the predicaments and social becoming of youth in Africa. In fact, youth have been characterized as "makers and breakers" (Boeck and Honwana 2005), "vanguards or vandals" (Abbink and Kessel 2004), the "sacrificed generation" (Sharp 2002), caught in "waithood" (Honwana 2012; Dhillon and Yousef 2009; Singerman 2007), and subjects whose "hope is cut" (Mains 2011). While they "dream of a great future for themselves" (Falola 2004, 2), they build the bridge that connects generations, value systems and communities (Burton and Charton-Bigot 2010; Masquelier 2010). According to these characterizations, youth are not stuck with only faith and luck; they also make faith their luck, while they try to come to terms with the realities of their social, political and moral environments. The so-called Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa, the *Y'en a marre* movement in Senegal, and the *Balai Citoyen* in Burkina Faso, are all instances of youth agency and transformative social action that target social and moral orders. Part of the argument here is to say that there is

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5 I want to stress here that the Salafi attitude is not just about awareness, but more than that; it cultivates a consciousness that is supposed to shape all views, attitudes and actions in whatever context the Salafi might find him or herself.

more than waiting, exclusion and resignation precisely because in navigating (see Christiansen et al. 2006) the social world, students deploy imagination and exert particular forms of agency aimed at reconstructing their social, political and moral conditions. As I shall show, AEMN/UAM students articulate both moral norms and political concepts in which they ground their roles, lives, status and visions of the future (Piot 2010). Understanding how these social actors – and not simply as adults in the making – see themselves, operate, act and build their groups and communities is central to theorizing social becoming and political action in Niger today.

I structure the chapter in four sections. In the first, I provide some background to help understand the process I examine. Then, I introduce the AEMN/UAM and discuss how members of this organization perceive their campus as the training ground for students fully committed to advance Salafism. In many ways, following in the footsteps of the prophet Muhammad – a feature of their religiosity – is now the driving force of what I call the social curriculum of the campus. The third section discusses how some of the Salafi ideas feed that curriculum. In the last section, I show how, while focusing on the campus, the real goal of Salafi students is to get rid of secular values and re-Islamize the society. The hope is that in a trickling effect, and channelled by the agentive power of this elite in the making, Salafi ideas and values will spread into the society as a whole.

The Religious Turn on Campus

The UAM was created in 1971 in order to respond to the demand of civil servants in a country at the time still dependent on France and the neighbouring countries to administer its state system. Consequently, until the end of the 1980s, the UAM was central to the social and economic policies of Niger. As one graduate put it: "Graduating from UAM carried prestige and ensured you a good job."[6] With around twenty thousand students today, the UAM is still the main higher education institution in the country and, as one could also imagine, an arena of contestation of state policies. In that regard, its students have played a historic role, especially in the 1990s as the country was transitioning to constitutional rule. Their strikes and demonstrations calling for better study and living conditions have regularly added to tense political situations, which, in some cases, ended up in military interventions and take-overs (1996, 1999 and 2010).

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6   Issa, graduated in 1986.

Since the 1990s, and following a global trend, Islam has acquired an un-precedented popularity in Niger, becoming an even more important factor in the religious field and one of the most audible public discourses. Salafism has been key to this development as it spread across urban areas, in particular among Western-educated constituencies, redefining interactions and governability.[7] This is illustrated by the way Salafi youth organizations have set up the infrastructural basis for their interactions between the religious and the political arenas, while they are gradually transforming the conditions of civic engagement, moral activism, social agency and therefore governance in general. Indocile, they have cultivated and popularized anti-Sufism, the main trait of their engagement with the religious sphere, created social spaces and promoted initiatives that are all aimed at transforming moral and political orders in the country.

It is worth noting that in their pursuit of higher education, most UAM students had to leave the relative security of their hometowns to settle in Niamey and therefore face the challenges of living in the city. At this critical juncture in their lives, large numbers come from hundreds of kilometres away, to experience living with peers in an unfamiliar setting. While many seek an aunt, uncle or simply an acquaintance with whom to stay, others have no alternative but to pile into the university dorms. A two-student room usually welcomes three or even four more, as students have to stretch the room and draw on all forms of solidarity and affinities (former schoolmates, same town or region, same discipline, same Islamic organization, etc.).

They are then compelled to create their own social networks, a process now eased by religious organizations. "*Niamey est méchante et sans pitié*," (lit. Niamey is harsh and ruthless) is a view that many express as they become acquainted with the moral predicaments of daily life in Niamey, adjust to new social codes and face new challenges and apprehensions. Pointing to urban anxieties and fears of immorality, student activists emphasize the need to "morally protect students who may easily get caught" and be lost to various temptations of the city (idleness, alcohol drinking, sexual promiscuity, libertinism or even smoking). It is within this context that Salafism emerges as a major discourse which seeks to provide a moral discipline, and therefore social security, to students who are viewed as spiritually weak and at risk.

This narrative about the power of Islam to morally armour students, "not simply against the temptations of the city, but also against its aggressions," as

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7   I use this term to refer to the ways in which communities, groups and individuals interact with institutions and authorities to make possible the implementations of specific rules, orders and policies.

a Law student put it, provides Salafi initiatives (a literacy program, preaching, lectures, etc.) with legitimacy and justification on the UAM campus. This is significant, especially when one considers that for a long time the UAM was perceived as a sanctuary for secular ideologies, for "only a few would actually pray and follow the prescriptions of Islam,"[8] although most of them would claim to be Muslim and offspring of Muslims. Militant in their attempts to improve their study and living conditions, UAM students have regularly taken to the streets to make their voices heard and their demands met. Similar to their counterparts on most African University campuses, their main ideological frame and phraseology were borrowed from the Marxist class struggle paradigm, as they claim to be the "sons and daughters of the countryside".

In short, as a former leader of the Union des Etudiants du Niger à l'Université de Niamey (UENUN) put it, "Before, religion didn't matter on this campus."[9] Today, Salafism has invited itself into campus life, while its discourses have overshadowed the Marxist-Leninist ideology that shaped debates, societal visions, political cultures and even the ways in which students viewed their role as citizens throughout the 1990s. At the quotidian level, the phrase '*chers camarades*' (dear comrades), the popular and emblematic words of address in campus speech has now been overtaken and replaced by "*chers frères et soeurs*"(dear brothers and sisters), the typical formula among Muslim activists. I have heard students referring ironically to Salafi activists saying, "They are *chers-frères*," illustrating some of the ways in which words of address have become important in this social context.[10]

To understand the influential role religiosity might have – and is already having – in Niger's politics and elite interactions, one need only look at UAM campus. In recent years, mosques and Islamic learning circles have emerged in a number of different faculties, with some having more than one. The Africa Muslims Agency (AMA), an organization mainly funded by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, has been a key sponsor of these developments in Niger and across Africa (Sounaye 2011.) On the UAM campus in particular, and due to a renewed interest in Islam among both students and faculty members, AMA has built mosques and provided reading materials, a strategy that focuses on space-making and the formation of an elite. Understood in context, this move envisions the promotion of Islamic values and norms through the gradual Islamization

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8   Gandou, MA English, graduated in 2011.

9   Ismael, MA Psychology, graduated in 1998.

10   There is certainly a whole research project one could develop on the language of Salafism and the ways in which it construes the world and becomes the repository of a worldview.

of the social fabric of an elite that has been crucial in governing the society and producing its norms.

There is, however, more than policy and development interventions to account for the rise of Salafism on campus. One must also consider the ways in which Islamic revival as a whole has become so prevalent in the broader social context (Sounaye 2009b). Generally speaking, it is fair to say that 1990s' political liberalization and constitutional governance became the catalyst of a re-Islamization process that has now reshaped the public sphere. In Egypt and Indonesia, for example, similar trends have been observed as marginalized or hitherto invisible social actors emerge to redefine the cultural, political and even the economic role of Islamic revival (Hirschkind 2013; Mahmood 2011; Rudnyckyj 2010). In the present context, it is worth noting that as Islam gains publicity, embracing Salafism is equated with being modern and breaking from traditional power structures and modes of social control that are deemed alienating. It is then not surprising that among university students, usually viewed as the products and custodians of political and cultural modernity, Salafism is gaining popularity and becoming a sign of distinction, which bestows additional social capital.

The Association des Etudiants Musulmans du Niger (AEMN) and the Demand for Islam

There are many religious organizations and groups on the UAM campus including Muslim, Christian (Groupe Biblique, Campus pour Christ, etc.) and Baha'i.[11] But, the most active is the AEMN/UAM. Over the years, this organization has developed into the main agent of re-Islamization of the campus through the promotion of Salafism and a systematic rejection of *laicité*. The AEMN/UAM was preceded by the AEMUN (*Association des Etudiants Musulmans à l'Université de Niamey*), legally authorized in 1991 but banned in 2000 following their alleged involvement in violent demonstrations against the Festival International de la Mode Africaine. It was legalized again a few years later, but had to restructure and change its denomination. It then took the name AEMN/UAM in 2010, becoming only a part of the national umbrella organization of the AEMN that now has branches in every public university in the country.

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11   A monotheistic religion, which originated in Persia and spread to Niger in the middle of
      the 20th century. It has struggled to make much inroad, counting at best only a few hun-
      dred followers.

A steering committee and several ad hoc committees help develop and manage the organization. For example, each faculty (Agronomy, Humanities and Social Sciences, Sciences, Law and Economics, and Health Sciences) has its own *da'wa* (call to Islam, proselytizing) committee. Similarly, each mosque has its committee (*Comité de Gestion des Mosquées*) in charge of cleaning, gathering mats for prayers and various other activities including movie viewing. Arabic literacy, Qur'anic lessons, cleaning public spaces and a set of activities they list under the category of *da'wa* (lectures, conferences, sermons) make up the activity program. Members' voluntary contributions, in particular when they are paid their stipend, are the major source of funding for the organization. However, on the side, the AEMN/UAM also runs a bookshop, a printing service which helps duplicate and distribute reading materials,[12] produces *Le Messager*, its monthly newsletter, and subsequently funds activities whenever external funding is not available.

According to its constitution, the main objectives of the AEMN/UAM are "to train its members to know and better understand Islam" (*oeuver à la formation de ses membres pour une connaissance et une bonne comprehension de l'islam*) and contribute to the social and economic development of Niger. Thus, activities are organized throughout the year to fulfil this mission. As an illustration, the mosque of the Faculty of Agronomy hosted a lecture on November 20th 2014 to welcome newly registered students who "needed to be taught the cultural stakes (*enjeux*) of being a student in Niamey". According to Bashir, the guest-lecturer, the AEMN/UAM has the responsibility "to change the image of the UAM student who used to be Marxist and prone to unreligious behaviour because of *laïcité*." He later added:

> I graduated from this institution. When I landed here, I knew almost nothing about Islam, but by the end of my studies, I learned enough to give back to my fellow youngsters ... I am here to give back; someone has to carry on the work [*la relève doit être assurée*], because I know that youth are the hope of tomorrow. If they learn Islam today, it will be for the benefit of the whole society.

At the UAM and across many other urban milieus of Niamey, this perspective explains the demand for Islam and the idea that students need the AEMN's assistance to keep themselves from being derailed and becoming prey to the moral black hole of the campus and any other non-Muslim institution. Religion

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12   Its monthly newsletter, *Le Messager* (The Messenger), is among the most circulated of the press produced on campus.

in this instance provides a structure, an idea reiterated in the AEMN's guide for new students, whereby to be student at the UAM is "to cultivate academic excellence and to develop and live faith in accordance with Islam".

Conversations among the Western-educated who have now embraced Salafism, regularly refer to Cheick Daouda Boureima, a graduate of the UAM, and the Imam who has been leading the Friday congregational prayer on campus for more than fifteen years. A prominent figure of Salafism in Niger and across the Sahel region,[13] he targets the Western-educated elite and, since 2011, serves as the Prime Minister's advisor in religious and humanitarian affairs. His affinity with the political elite has opened many avenues for him, not only in the government and on campus, but also in diplomatic circles[14] and the state-controlled media. Most young activists view him as an inspiring role model, as a religious entrepreneur with a compelling life trajectory. In fact, after graduating from the UAM, he went on to study at the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia. Once he returned, he launched numerous initiatives including seminars, conferences and preaching, and developed a sustained media presence (radio, TV, internet, Facebook, etc.) which has made him an icon of Salafism and the prime example of the student who can successfully combine academic and religious training. This inclusive and integrated view of the two traditions has regularly led Boureima to highlight their complementarity and the need for Niger to promote social and intellectual role models such as he represents. Islamic and Western forms of education, he has argued, are not mutually exclusive and should not be understood in that way if the true Islam-based moral order needed in Niger is to be achieved.

In light of Boureima's example, a man who has also claimed to give back, UAM students frame their activities in terms of generosity and solidarity. While they stress views such as: "We have the moral obligation to share with other fellows the knowledge [of Islam] we have acquired," (Bashir); and "We are obliged to share whatever good we have," (Idriss); most Salafi students claim that "Your religiosity is your own responsibility," (Albora). Ultimately this situates rebirth, self-writing (Diagne 2008) and privatization processes at the centre of Salafi discourses and practices. In other words, in this setting, where promoting Islam was perceived as foreign until recently, dramatic conversions have become common and exemplary. If they are not already part of the process, many faculty members have witnessed their students taking the religious turn,

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13   He is also the chair of *La Ligue des Oulémas, Prêcheurs et Imams des Pays du Sahel*, a regional organization.

14   He is arguably the Muslim scholar who has been the most involved in US Embassy initiatives, in part because of his non-violent stand.

often in the face of secular ideologies, including Marxism, which they see as unfit to be on campus or in their Muslim society.

Being Salafi on Campus

Is the growing interest in Salafism on campus a reaction to an institutional make-up that wants to keep religion out of the public education sphere? The response to this question is clearly positive if we consider the content of the regularly held AEMN/UAM sermons and lectures. The issue of promoting religion in school settings, formally or informally, as part of the curriculum or extra-curricular activities, has become critical to promoters of Salafism on campus who seek to move away from the model of the unreligious and secular student. For many students, attending university is the beginning of a life transition away from parental control in which they are supposedly fully responsible for the choices they make. Nonetheless, and although decisive and transformative, the experience can be challenging and dramatic, especially for female students who are leaving home for the first time and must now rely on themselves and peers. But the experience has also translated into an opportunity to engage in religious activism and be reborn to Salafism, a discourse that has set up what I call the social curriculum.[15]

At the Faculty of Humanities, female students have now their own mosque where they hold some of their preaching and learning activities. As Sara, a member of the mosque committee states, "Sometimes, only women can help women; only women can help women understand what Islam is about," before adding, "we are all young here and Islam needs our support." If this last formula has become popular among students, it is certainly because it objectifies Islam and blurs lines of demarcation between social statuses or even generations, a point Albora, a third-year student in linguistics makes:

> [O]nly ulama[16] used to speak for Islam and tell people what the religion is about. Youngsters were supposed to just follow; women had almost no

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15   I define social curriculum here as the set of activities, training programs, lectures, seminars, sermons etc. that are intended to socialize students, making them more religion-conscious, while these initiatives position Salafism at the core of campus social life. Along with the academic element, I would argue that the social curriculum is a major component of the student's campus experience today.

16   Religious scholars.

place. In the western part of Niger, people even believed that until you were 40, you couldn't be a scholar; you were just expected to read the Qur'an and follow suit. Now, we know those beliefs are groundless and understanding Islam should not be about age nor gender.

One of the reasons for this vibrant development is that the AEMN has empowered students to put religiosity first and help their peers to do so, on campus and beyond, with other schooled youth. Filana, a female student in linguistics also notes:

> As a Muslim, I participate in the activities of the Makaranta [Islamic learning group] in our Faculty. I am also part of the Da'wa Committee. We call our fellow students to Islam. You know, most students have to leave home after they complete high school. They move away from their parents and family members. And they are left alone to organize their lives on campus. Many are lost when they get here because they have no one to give them the orientation they need in their new life [*rayuwa*], and that could be a risky moment. There is no mom, and no dad; nobody around to advise or admonish you. You decide to lead the life you want. So, that's why we try to protect students from going astray. The sermons we organize help them to adjust and be aware of those risks. We draw their attention to them and provide them with the moral support and the advice they need to cope with life on campus.

As a preventive, this activism is more crucial for the young woman who faces even greater challenges and demands than young men, in particular regarding her body, as Filana adds:

> When a female student attends the *da'wa* activities, she learns to behave, and understand, for example, the importance of covering her body. I don't believe it is a good thing for a woman to exhibit her body. She will understand that in order to preserve her dignity, she needs to cover up. She may not wear a Niqab [full veil], but she should cover up all her body except her hands and eyes. The Prophet's wives and the wives of his successors all behaved that way. So, when she joins the Da'wa Committee, she is not scorned if she doesn't wear the hijab. No. We approach her and calmly tell her why the hijab is important for a woman. And then, usually, she realizes that it's not because they are uncivilized that people wear the hijab.

Another translation of this discourse on gender and self can be seen in other Salafi practices that lead to gendering space, not only in campus mosques, but also in classrooms and lecture halls. Asindama, a male student in philosophy, makes a direct connection between the call to Salafism and a developing trend: "In one of our lecture halls, it is now rare to see female and male students mingle. Usually, females are on one side and males on the other. I even noticed some clans forming among females. Those who wear the hijab, and those who do not." Another male student points to similar changes: "In the hall assigned to law students, there are areas male students are not supposed to be. We used to stay there and chitchat, but it is now 'female space'; nobody forbids us from going there, but we just don't go." Concerned, some students, like Fati, a member of the Da'wa Committee, have even suggested action to enforce a strict gender rule: "I don't like the way we sit indiscriminately; sometimes, you find a girl sitting between two male students; that's not normal and we should end that. The Sunna proscribes the mingling of sexes."

While no gender rule has been officially instituted to seat students during lectures in order to enact religious prescriptions for personal and gender space, many aggregate along gender lines and sometimes even sartorial practices, as Asindama noted above. It is not that gender has never been a matter of consideration in campus life; campus housing, for example, has always been gender specific. However, in addition to student dorms, the campus dining queues are now also subject to gender discrimination "after a request from the AEMN/UAM, in order to avoid mingling and to facilitate service". The same trend affects transportation as "We even have a student commissioned by our organization [AEMN/UAM] who makes sure that people queue according to their sex and that female students get in first." (Hanna, third-year student in psychology)

The UAM campus is replete with stories and anecdotes pointing to the significance of being, or at least appearing, a good Muslim. Yaro, a graduate of the sociology department, recalls: "A few years ago, a student running for a position in the steering committee of our organization [UENUN], added 'Leo' to his name. His opponents seized the opportunity to portray him as a Christian. He lost the election." Now, as a consequence, many candidates lobby for the support of the Muslim students' organization as they realize its influence on almost anything that relates to life on campus. One could easily imagine this turn in campus politics being carried on beyond the campus, for political antagonism or simply out of conviction. In a way, this is already happening, as many graduates of UAM have become leading voices in the dissemination of Salafi ethics and political views more broadly.

Beyond the Campus

In the logic of the AEMN/UAM, the re-Islamization of the campus is only an intermediary goal. The ultimate achievement is to transform society and Muslim practices so that "we all follow in the path of Prophet Muhammad and his pious followers".[17] Because of its cultural and political influence, it is understandable that the UAM, as a major intellectual and social institution, has become the target and the breeding ground for such a project. The moral and religious identity of the elite carries considerable weight, particularly because of the cultural agency and trend-setting power of this social category.[18] That is why, as Bashir argued during his public lecture in November, 2014, "The UAM campus is the perfect place to start changing people's mindsets [*changer les mentalités*]."[19] For, unlike the other towns from which most UAM students originate, and despite all the risks of the city, Niamey still facilitates access to Islamic learning and to the resources needed for such endeavour. To persuade his audience, he resorts to his own trajectory: "I come from more than 700 km away. When I got here to the UAM, I figured out I had a great opportunity to become learned in Islam. So, I got trained here while I was pursuing my degree in medicine."

This narrative of rebirth is not exceptional. On the contrary, it has become common for many UAM graduates who have taken positions across Niger in state administration, NGOs, the private sector or the numerous Islamic organizations. Like Bashir or Cheick Daouda, they usually frame their initiatives in terms of assistance, religious training (*formation religieuse*) and giving back to the community. With such views and social philosophies, their impact on the religious field has proved significant, as they have contributed to ushering in a new breed of leaders trained in both religious and secular systems. The least one could say today is that this process has transformed the sociological configurations of both the religious sphere and the social category produced by the Western education institutions (*Yan Boko*).

Thus, "We are fighting for Islam," – a slogan I have heard repeatedly in my conversations with UAM students – is not simply a rhetorical device to be added to the war of words that Muslim activists wage against remnants of what they see as colonial governance and inappropriate moral principles drawn

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17   Mallam, member of the steering committee of AEMN/UAM.

18   It is common for local conversations on the street to blame the intellectual and political elite for the moral ills of society, from corruption in the state administration and the lack of employment opportunities to the several coups d'etat the country has experienced.

19   Lecture, Nov. 20th 2014.

from French political philosophy.[20] Rather, it is the articulation of a political project designed to decolonize and morally reorder society by rejecting both secular norms and Islamic practices deemed inauthentic. What happens on the UAM campus may therefore be read as an ideological development that not only constitutes Salafism as the major source of values and norms, but also silences the Marxist-Leninist tradition which has until recently shaped students' politics, moral economy and interactions with the rest of society.[21] A parallel can be drawn here with similar cases in Tunisia (Marks 2013), Gambia (Janson 2013) and Senegal (Gomez-Perez 2008) where youth rely heavily on religiosity to shape those interactions.

Overall, the rise of Salafism at the UAM echoes a gradual transformation of living conditions among Nigerien youth in general, but also a gradual transformation of moral references and paradigms in the wider Nigerien society. Breaking away from secular postcolonial nationalism, unlike their elders two decades ago, many of these students resort to a populism that builds on the appeal to adhere to the Sunna, the Qur'an and the Pious Ancestors. As ideological resources, one of the functions of these references is to provide both moral contours and substance, and the imagery through which students understand their life on campus, engage with the political order and articulate their dreams and visions.

The fact that their campus experience is transitional, both in time and space, does not make it less valuable. Quite the contrary, it is precisely this experience that "prepares them to become good Muslims" (Sara); "responsible social actors" (Albora); and "political leaders" (Filana). In this process, the AEMN provides the social curriculum, that is, the set of activities and training and socializing practices that, next to the academic curriculum, is intended to equip students with the skills and norms that would make them culturally, politically and socially relevant. Under such circumstances, in the same way the campus trained an elite that built on Marxism-Leninism and acquired relevance and influence through the 1990s, it is now providing similar conditions for students – future leaders – to build on religious activism and claims to have both the moral obligation and the social pressure to be better Muslims.

Indeed, this perspective has mobilized youth to be part of a campus activism through which they are expressing self-worth and social agency, and also formulating new political concepts which are clearly opposed to secular

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20   A political philosophy usually described as anti-Islamic.

21   In that sense, there is also a socio-historical continuity between the current generation and the previous one: the campus remains a breeding ground of activism whether secular or religious.

ideologies. While Salafi youth justify this activism and link it to processes in broader society, they are also opening a window onto their aspirations, providing an idea of the community they envision and the moral and ideological features of this entity. That these students insist on religious training (*formation*) is evidence of the rising awareness among young people of their historical role in affecting the moral economy of the society: a role they are preparing for, beginning in the premises of their academic institution. Here, unlike in many social arenas and spaces where they are said to be powerless, marginalized, disenfranchised or even subordinate, youth may initiate and mobilize, taking roles similar to those they played in the transition to multiparty politics in the 1990s or in the Tuareg rebellions of the 1990s and 2000s, two references that have marked Niger's recent history.

Abbink (2005) and McIntyre (2007) argue that when young people lack social incentives for growth and development, they look somewhere else for opportunities. The AEMN/UAM and religious activism in general could be that somewhere. For many UAM students, the struggle is about preparing themselves to face the challenges of the campus, an environment usually portrayed as morally dangerous. With no family around and at a critical juncture of their lives, young people going to the UAM are said to be at risk, exposed to both the moral potholes and black holes of the city.[22] Those vices and the ills of the city justify the AEMN's initiatives. *Matassa* (those who are becoming) and agents of the future, as they are portrayed, Salafi students feel compelled to build an image and invest in 'advancing Islam' in an ideological context they usually frame in terms of a conflict of civilizations. In fact, they have frequently borrowed this narrative, emphasizing the need not only of ending the hegemony of *laïcité* – which, among other things, has favoured Marxism-Leninism – but of erasing its influence all together. In many ways, they have been successful in mobilizing support and changing the norms of campus life (hours of prayers, dress code, gendering space etc.), but also in training an elite that is carrying on the mission of re-Islamizing society at large.

If the project of secular modernity is to change society through enlightenment and reliance on a rationality that emancipates itself from religion, the Salafi project rather proposes to channel religiosity into an individual and collective rebirth in order to achieve transformation. In this undertaking, the rebirth could be borrowing from, challenging and even conflicting with the project of rational modernity. Often, as the positions I have highlighted

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22   According to Kader, a student in Physics and member of AEMN/UAM, life on campus could be a pothole on the street, which could result in a flat tire, or a black hole that engulfs everything.

suggest, Salafism is competing against the secular; and the competition has sometimes become an open conflict. That is why it seems to me that as the situation develops, UAM authorities will find themselves compelled to regulate religious activism and even social interactions on campus. The expanding influence of Salafism as it shapes the social curriculum of many students is more than an epiphenomenon; indeed, it is something of an ideological revolution that is targeting the social fabric of the elite and its moral references. However, the socio-political itineraries and moral trajectories this trend will take remain to be seen.

Closing Comments

Once the training ground for a generation that was expected to lead the country, renew state administration and take key social roles, UAM's campus now provides a new breed of leaders who combine secular education and religious training and hope to create the necessary conditions for civic life. What 'civic' would mean in this context is something that needs to be clarified. Still, from the perspective of the AEMN/UAM, since the population in Niger is vastly Muslim, anything they could undertake in the name of Islam qualifies as furthering the common good. That explains why Salafi students target the campus not only as an academic training ground, but also as a socialization space which is now playing a primary role in the agenda to transform society and implement the political and ideological alternatives they promote.

To grasp the significance of this process, one must also recognize the continuities of such developments within schooling environments. For example, many of the Salafi activists at the UAM embraced religious activism in high school (Lycée) as members of their school's Islamic Club (*Club des Jeunes Musulmans*, CJM), which provided them with the social, religious and cultural premises they intend to perfect once on campus. This trend has made the school space a privileged site for the popularization of the revivalist ethic of responsibility and privatization dear to Salafi discourse. As we can see from this case, while undoing specific power and ideological structures, the same discourse has also established replacements which stress not only being good Muslim, but also fitting into society.

In that sense, the UAM campus is a micro-representation of broader Niger society. Before the 1990s, for example, a student who displayed commitment to religious practice would be stereotyped as "*réactionnaire*", a derogatory label used for students unsupportive or actively opposed to the UENUN's dominance in campus life. Shaped by a fight culture, the campus was usually viewed

as a domain of contestation against both the moral and the political orders in place. For this reason, its discourse was clothed in Marxist-Leninist phraseology, eager to bring about the social and political changes that would insure students a bright future and the well-being of the society. Vanguards they were; vanguards they remain in many regards.

Today, in their search for a moral compass, many young Nigeriens have found in Salafism a resource to tap into, both collectively and individually, in order to fulfil their social responsibilities. This is only part of the efforts to reconstruct social norms and reassert the preeminence of an Islamic identity which, as many have complained, has been marginalized or even rejected in the moral and political philosophy of state institutions. The religious identity politics that the AEMN/UAM is promoting mainly serves the purpose of fighting this orientation.

In any case, as I have demonstrated, Salafism has introduced major transformations to campus, where the demand for Islam has given rise to thriving social engineering initiatives, in return reinforcing the role of Islam as a major source of norms. By stressing the need for students to view all dimensions of their lives through the Qur'an and the Sunna of Muhammad, the AEMN/UAM has paved the way to a religious activism that many students expect to carry beyond the campus and after graduation into their professional lives. What actual political ends this activism will achieve beyond the campus remain open and worth watching, as these students are not only imagining their own futures, but also creating the conditions of their existence as subjects, citizens and social actors.

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Patronage and Ethnicity amongst Politically Active Young Kenyans

Eija Ranta

Introduction

When I met Garakilo in the sunlit courtyard of the University of Nairobi, this normally calm and prudent young student was simmering with the anger of deep disappointment. Born in the Rift Valley with roots in the north eastern corner of rural Kenyan borderlands, he had always been active in party politics: prior to 2012 in the Kenya African National Union (KANU), Kenya's sole political party during the long one-party state era, and after that, in the National Alliance (TNA), the leading party of the current governing coalition known as the Jubilee Alliance. During campaigning, the TNA explicitly portrayed itself as a youthful party, which gave Garakilo high hopes for the possibility of social change that would benefit Kenya's large but often disregarded majority: the youth. After less than two years from the seemingly successful political victory, his anticipation had, however, turned into mere frustration and, to an extent, anger. He felt that the youth had been bypassed once again. "If, [as a young person in party politics], you don't have money, forget it," he said to me. "Only the thieves will make it," he observed disconsolately as harsh sunlight came out from behind the trees of the patio and briefly blinded him.

John, on the other hand, was of the opposing camp. Born in Western Kenya, he was a youth leader in one of the political parties belonging to the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD), a conglomeration in the Kenyan parliament opposing the governing regime. Having started his political activism in the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD-Kenya), which had effectively challenged the one-party rule of the KANU during the 1990s, he portrayed himself as a fierce believer in democratization through party politics. Yet being part of a politically marginalized ethnic group, he felt that what he called the "ethnicization of party politics" was the main reason for their continued presence in the opposition – and a major challenge for the youth of Kenya because, in his opinion, political parties, including those in the opposition, were identified with "the ethnic naming of the leader". Despite

these challenges, he retained the anticipation of democratic change. I became acquainted with both of these politically active young Kenyans through a youth political network that was supported by the international development donor community.

From the perspective of the emergence of young leaders in the centres of Kenyan politics, the 2013 elections have been perceived as a major success by many (Elder, Stigant and Claes 2014). Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto – the elected president and vice-president respectively – explicitly portrayed themselves as representing the fresh and dynamic younger generations of the digitalized social media era against the elderly and stagnated status quo politicians (Muna, Stanton and Mwau 2014, 1390–1391). At the age of 51, Kenyatta was, indeed, the youngest among the Kenyan post-independence presidents in comparison to Mwai Kibaki elected at the age of 71 (2002), Jomo Kenyatta at 70 (1964) and Daniel arap Moi at 54 (1978) (ibid., 1385). More importantly, a relatively large number of young people between the ages of 18 and 35, which is the official definition of youth in the Kenyan constitution (Republic of Kenya 2010, Section 260), were either elected or nominated to the parliament. Kenya's 2010 constitution introduced affirmative action, that is, youth quotas both for the Senate – one young man and one young woman nominated by political parties – and for the National Assembly – twelve seats for youth, persons with disabilities and workers – in order to strengthen the enhancement of the political rights of the youth cohort. With 5.9 per cent of Members of Parliament (MPS) under the age of 30, Kenya became the top country worldwide in the number of youth at the Upper House of Parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2014, 9). An estimated 75 per cent of Kenyans are less than 30 years old, while 39 per cent are aged between twenty and forty-nine (Muna, Stanton and Mwau 2014, 1383). Given the demographic majority of youth in Kenya, this political transformation appears as justified – yet insufficient.

This chapter examines how young people active in party politics portray their hardships and obstacles while trying to enter parliamentary political forums. It discusses how they narrate the complex relationships – and apparent contradictions – between an assumedly youth-friendly political shift and real-life experiences of marginalization on the basis of two issues: political patronage and ethnicity. While political patronage and ethnicity have been widely and exhaustively debated in scholarly literature on African politics, they still resonate strongly in the experiences and narratives of these politically active young Kenyans. Through the examination of these issues, the chapter touches upon the delicate and constantly shifting boundaries between exclusion and inclusion, hopes and despair.

Methodologically, the chapter draws on interviews with nine young members of political parties, four activists in youth organizations, and one former student politician currently a political strategist for an oppositional political party.[1] Four of the political party members were women, while the rest were men. However, the chapter is narrated predominantly through the stories of Garakilo and John,[2] who were exceptionally analytical when elaborating on the importance of the intersectionality between age, class, and ethnicity in Kenyan politics. Their views effectively represented the general feelings among my informants with the exception that they were more self-reflexive about their own political parties. The interviews were conducted during fieldwork in July 2014 and January 2015. I acquired prior knowledge of the issues related to political participation in Kenya during a commissioned research for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland on its development cooperation programme, which included study of the massive electoral aid provided by the foreign donor community for the 2013 elections (Katsui et al. 2014). The fieldwork for that purpose was conducted during October and November 2013.

Political Patronage among Party Formations

I interviewed Garakilo in January 2015. He told me that his political career had started as a youth leader in the KANU. From 2012 onwards, however, he had joined the group that supported the presidency of Uhuru Kenyatta who subsequently, formed the TNA for that purpose. Why had he then become so disappointed so soon after the TNA had won the elections? One incident that explains it partly had happened in his community of origin. As a member of the TNA, Garakilo had had an interest in standing for parliament in the 2013 elections. However, he had been asked by the leaders of his community – all male and much older than himself – to step down and to make way for a senior candidate. As all decisions related to politics were made in these male elders' community meetings, "What they say is what will go on and will be accepted by all community members", he stated. He concluded that although many younger people tend to have more education and experiences outside

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1 Although this chapter focuses on youth in political parties, it is acknowledged here that much youth political activism in Kenya occurs outside formal parliamentary forums including such 'legitimate' forums as NGOs, mainstream churches, student unions, and sports clubs, as well as politically more contradictory arenas such as charismatic religious movements, militias and gangs (Frederiksen 2010, 1079).

2 These are pseudonyms.

the community than the elders, "[They] have a disadvantage, because they do not have a say in [community] meetings: it is a taboo to talk in front of the elders". Through his participation in the TNA activities, he had searched for an opportunity to change this pattern. However, his real-life experiences inside the party did not live up to his expectations, as the following excerpt from the interview with Garakilo demonstrates:

> When I joined the TNA, most of the campaign and the policies that we used in TNA was that it is a youthful party. Although the leadership of the party was just chosen not elected, most of them were young people who are thirty years and below. But we discovered that this was just used for [a] short time before the elections. And immediately after the elections, these young people who were given different tasks in the party, they are not there anymore. They are there just by name … So we discovered that this was another trick that is used by politicians, to use the name of the youth before the elections, and immediately they won the elections, most of the young people who engineered everything in the social media, in the campaign and everything, are no longer there … Most of the youth in Kenya are used by politicians, they'll come and they'll give you all the opportunities before the elections, but once the elections are done and they got what they want, then the youth are no more: they are not involving them in the decision making, they are not asked anything … And it's not only in one-party, it's the same thing in all the political parties … Things change immediately after elections, completely … Even the leadership will pretend to be very democratic and everything before elections and turn out to be very tough dictator in everything immediately after the elections are won.

Thus, Garakilo felt that, in the practice of national politics, he was experiencing similar patterns of exclusion as in local politics, despite the promises to the contrary. The TNA party politics seemed to include young men and women in their activities during political campaigning, but when the party had obtained decision-making powers the presence of the youth seemed to vanish. Garakilo's narrative also reflected a discrepancy between pre-election and post-election times in terms of hope and pessimism. There was a hope for change during the pre-election era and a disappointment afterwards.

Garakilo's feeling of being "used" by elderly decision makers, whether community leaders or politicians, was widely shared by many young Kenyans active not solely in formal party politics but also in NGOs and activists groups. Many of them identified this with the phenomenon of political patronage widely

discussed in the academic literature on African politics and state formation. Starting with the well-known work on neopatrimonialism by Chabal and Daloz (1999), political patronage has been associated with the exercise of patrimonial power in Africa. As a contrast to modern, rational-legal bureaucracies, patrimonialism in Weber's sense refers to a type of state formation which is centred on the male ruler and his family. Stretching this to the context of modern Kenyan state formation, neopatrimonialism refers to the running of the postcolonial state through patron-client networks, where the president or some other major political leader (patron) distributes state resources, such as land, state contracts, and development projects, to his allies (clients) (Sundet and Moen 2009, 6). The logic behind this reciprocal patronage system is that "the distribution of material resources and the manipulation of state actions in favour of clients are important ways that patrons can increase their power and entrench their positions of influence" (Matter 2010, 69). Consequently, "rather than using their control of institutions like parliament, the presidency or the judiciary to protect Kenyans and their livelihoods, elites in power have tended to use their power to seize resources" (Branch 2011, 21–22).

In the case of his own community, Garakilo admitted that many perceived that if an elderly person were elected to the parliament, he would have more authority and wealth to "give stuff", such as water or pasture, to community members than he as a young university student would be able to do. This situation occurs because, as one civil society activist noted: "Even if you don't directly bribe people, you need to be shown as conducting *harambees*;[3] those who do more *harambees*, stand better chances of being elected". This implies that instead of the state or municipality functioning as a redistributive agent, the distribution – or non-distribution – of resources is seen by community members to be strongly dependent on individual political leaders and their networks (Branch 2011). As a result, people tend to direct their support, and opt to become part of the patron-client networks, of the wealthier ones. Garakilo had made the same observation. He further demonstrated how hard it is for young persons who have ideas but no resources to compete in the environment of these patron-client networks, as he told me in the interview:

> In an election year, you'll find a lot of money around. Everybody who wants to contest will come and look for a group of youth, "Where do you guys vote? Where do you guys stay? This place, this place", and give you a

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3   Swahili notion of 'working together'; established as a national slogan in Kenya by the first post-independence regime.

few thousands of shillings to share among the group. People will vote the
people from whom they got money. So, there is this young person who
is just selling ideas and policies he thinks he will implement after being
elected and then this other guy is giving out money throughout: when
you are sick, you'll find him in the hospital to pay for your hospital bill;
he is going to schools making donations, buying probably a school bus.
So, people [draw a conclusion] that if this guy is giving us all this money
now, it will be even much better when he is elected. But what they don't
realize is that, immediately after being elected, he starts trying to recover
the money he used in the elections, through dubious means, by taking
public funds. From public funds he is taking back the same money that
he used for the elections, and even more for [financing] the next election
[campaigns]. So the issue is that you will find that many youth, who are
interested in politics, are held back because they don't have money.

Garakilo's views of the importance of money – or its lack – in Kenyan poli-
tics were shared by many politically active young men and women. An activist
from a Nairobi-based NGO suggested that in Kenya, political parties have not
historically started as peoples' movements or social movements, but rather as
personal creations of what he called the "moneyed-old". Former student politi-
cian and a political strategist for one oppositional political party, on his part,
alleged that "Kenyan political party formations emerge from individuals, who
are rich and have the resources to run the political machinery". This is apt to
lead to political patronage, because it "comes from how much you have origi-
nally contributed to the party", as one aspiring youth leader in an oppositional
party noted. In regards to the possibilities of young men and women to emerg-
ing as candidates in the parliamentary elections, "How close you are to the
leader", he continued, "affects your nomination". Many of those who have been
able to enter into politics might be perceived as having been successful in, as
the activist from youth NGO commented, "allying with the old who run politi-
cal parties". This resembles Frederiksen's (2010, 1079) remark that in addition
to NGOs, churches and ethnic associations, youth politics may take place in
"party-political movements closely associated with 'big men', particularly ac-
tive at elections".

   Consequently, although Garakoli admitted that there were young men and
women who had been able to enter into parliamentary politics through their
ideas rather than money, especially in major cities such as Nairobi, it was diffi-
cult for him to perceive them as agents of change. He felt that it was extremely
difficult for young people to become active political subjects through other
means than by conforming to the rules of political patronage. In regards to

this, the above mentioned political strategist commented to me in the same lines:

> If we talk about youth participation, to be honest with you, they come more as appendixes to rich persons ... Most political formations ... are more or less closed clubs of few individuals, sometimes even one individual. Throughout the history of party life from 1992 up to now, you can see youth as being used ... The person who has the money; the financial power, is the person who will have the loyalty of the youth. I refuse to call it youth participation: it is youth co-option. Most youth that will find themselves in political office, are those youth who enjoy good will not so much from the political voter but enjoy the good will of the owners of political [parties]. Mostly [the youth] are political and ideological extensions of political elites...

What he seems to be suggesting here is that there appears to be a tendency in Kenyan party politics for politically active young people to be co-opted into complex networks of political patronage by wealthy political figures. Following the same line of thinking, it has been remarked that "like ethnicity, generational identities have been manipulated and instrumentalized by Africa's patrimonial elite" (Kagwanja 2005, 53). In a situation in which the distribution of state, municipal, and other resources is dependent on individual political leaders rather than formal, institutionalized mechanisms through which benefits and services are circulated, it appears to be difficult for young women and men to challenge the logics of political patronage. In the following, I will add the dimension of ethnicity to the discussion.

Mastering Ethnic Networks

I met John for the first time in a capacity building event organized jointly by a Washington-based, democracy-promoting NGO and a Nordic development NGO whose objectives included, among others, the enhancement of youth political participation and the strengthening of political parties. There were approximately forty participants from various political parties in this "interparty forum for the youth". John was representing his political party in which he served as the national youth leader and a member of its management committee. He had striven to become a candidate in the 2013 parliamentary elections but had, to his disappointment, lost to a fellow party member. However,

he had not lost hope but was rather determined, if resources would allow, to run as a candidate for the parliament in the elections in 2017.

When I later met John at his party's office, our discussions touched upon political patronage, to which he brought a new dimension. The major issue that he wanted to tackle during the interview was ethnicity and its significance for party politics in Kenya. He perceived "the ethnicization of political parties" as the major problem because, in his opinion, "You can't build political parties as institutions, as instruments of governance, because as they stand now they are like ethnic blocks without ideology". He suggested in the interview that, "Most political parties [are formed] on the basis of individuals leading those parties. For instance, if a political party is formed and lead by a person from my community, then I make it my political party…" Garakoli had addressed this same phenomenon in our interview by calling political parties "private companies". Thus, he listed that the TNA belonged to Uhuru Kenyatta, the United Republican Party (URP) to William Ruto and the Orange Democratic Movement Party (ODM) to Raila Odinga, the main opposition leader. He perceived them as patrons governing and controlling party politics within the Kenyan political landscape. Political patronage appears to be intimately linked with ethnic affiliation because, as John, on his part, noted, "The leader of the political party is like the king of the tribe or ethnic group". Kenyatta, Ruto and Odinga, it was noted, represent the Kikuyu, the Kalenjin and the Luo communities respectively. Curiously enough, in the case of Garakoli his ethnic background did not correspond with that of the TNA. In fact, the same applied to two other youth politicians from the governing coalition with whom I interacted. While their discourses about Kenyan politics were saturated with references to ethnicity, their own ethnic origins did not correspond with those that they themselves identified with the governing regime but rather with those of the politically marginalized opposition.

It is well-known that colonialism was instrumental in trying to encapsulate fluid social identities into ethnically fixed categories as part of its divide and rule policies (Kakai 2010; Karega-Munene 2010; Zeleza 2014). According to Mamdani (1996), the colonial state created ethnically based authoritarian governing mechanisms. In Kenya, European settlements were established as buffer zones in order to protect the British monopoly over the fertile Kenyan highlands and to weaken historically vivid intermingling among local communities (Kakai 2010, 37). Furthermore, each group was assigned specific labour positions (for example, the Kikuyu worked in the fields, the Luo were domestic servants), which further intensified ethnic categorization (ibid., 37–38). While the decolonization process was firmly grounded on nationalist discourses of unity and development, the silencing of political spaces and the shift towards

one-party state gradually caused ideological debates to wither away. Instead, as Zeleza (2014, 26) has noted, "ethnic mobilization and contestations assumed greater salience". Ideological battles between pro-West conservatives and socialist radicals were transformed into hostilities and rivalry, mainly between the Kikuyu and the Luo, the former governing the centralized state power. Although Moi, Kenya's dictatorial ruler for nearly 25 years, stressed the importance of Kenyan nationalism, he appointed members of his own ethnic group (the Kalenjin) into state positions that were previously held by the Kikuyu during the presidency of Kenyatta (Kakai 2010, 42). Subsequently, the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin have dominated the Kenyan political scene, while other groupings have remained predominantly in the political opposition.[4] This has had concrete political-economic consequences, because it has been shown that in Kenya, both the distribution of state resources and the appointment of state officials have systematically favoured the ethnic community of the ruling president (Hulterström 2007; see also Nyanchoga 2014). In relation to this, one young man from an oppositional party aspiring to enter parliament noted to me, "The stakes are very high, because people know that if you win, your people will benefit".

John, together with many other politically active young Kenyans, perceived that ethnic politics was a major problem for the youth because senior male politicians and community leaders have a very strong hold on the governing and controlling of ethnically determined patron-client networks. Some said that sometimes party leaders seemed to think that the right time for the youth to enter into politics came solely when "their grandfathers' networks have expired". The case of the current president illustrates the point. Perceived as a young and fresh candidate, he was, at the same time, perceived by many as the legitimate heir of his father's political legacy. Thus, he was considered by many as having inherited his father's ethnic networks and the position as the representative of the Kikuyu community, although not without ambiguities. For those young men and women without ties to existing political family dynasties, the opportunities were few, as John told me:

> If political parties are identified on basis of ethnicity and the ethnic naming of the leader, then they are so closed and political space is very, very narrow. And if the political space is narrow, then it's very difficult for young people without resources to penetrate that narrow stream

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4 It is often proposed that there are 42 ethnic groups in Kenya, the largest in number being the Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Kalenjin, Kamba, Kisii, Mijikenda, Somali and Meru (National Council for Population and Development 2013, 7).

> to advance to senior political positions ... This ethnic basis of political parties gives normally preference to [such] old people with money who support the interests of the party. They are given certificates and party positions. But for young people just struggling we don't have resources, we don't have nothing apart from our brains and time.

According to John, this exclusion had been historically constructed.

> During the ruling KANU era, most young people worked as youth-wingers; you were like the foot soldiers of the party. You were not given any role; your role was just to protect the party interests. When the party leaders wanted to go to a certain area, it was the youth-wingers who were given weapons, you see, to protect them. That narrative has continued to affect youth leadership, because till now, if you say that you are a youth leader of a party you are associated with being a youth-winger, and not with the institution in which you could do policies and contribute to the party. You are seen just as a security man for political parties. And that is killing the motivation for most young people to venture into politics.

During the one-party era, intergenerational division of labour tended to place youth predominantly in informal and illegitimate political spaces, while formal political arenas were occupied by the so-called 'Old Guard', "those believed to be unwilling to change and accept new ideas" (Muna, Stanton and Mwau 2014, 1378). Jomo Kenyatta, for example, used the youth wings of the KANU to weaken political rivals, while Moi employed them for political terror and extortion (Kagwanja 2005, 55). Accordingly, Kenyan political scientist Adams Oloo (2010, 150) has stated that "all elections during the one-party era witnessed violence meted out by youth-wingers, with prominent politicians hiring them to harass and disrupt their opponents' rallies".

John told me that, in his opinion, ethnic politics is the major cause for political violence in Kenya, "If you belong to another community then after elections if your community won, [other communities] are attacking you saying that you stole my victory". He concluded, "That is the basis for most conflicts and political violence in Kenya, because every community wants to lead". Indeed, except for the 2002 elections, organized violence, such as the use of youth militias to intimidate opposing candidates and sexual violence against women candidates and voters, has been part of all elections in Kenya (Sundet and Moen 2009, 10). In 2007, the post-electoral violence led to more than 1,200 deaths and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2008, 5). Violence, torture

and killings, although occasionally spontaneous, were systematically organized and financed by politically and economically affluent senior male politicians and conducted by youth militias, youth gangs and sometimes police officers and military personnel (Sundet and Moen 2009, 10–11). Even after the post-electoral violence and the realization of the urgent need to open up formal political forums for the youth, it was the older generation that was "fast to seize power behind closed doors and got away with the significant [governmental] positions" (Muna, Stanton and Mwau 2014, 1390).

Ethnicity, or what Lonsdale (1994) calls 'political tribalism', has arguably been one of the key drivers of politics in Kenya. It has even been suggested that political parties in Kenya, even more so than elsewhere in Africa, are predominantly organized by ethnic groups rather than ideological differences, class concerns or occupational matters (Hulterström 2007). Kinship and lineage based collectivities, community organizations and ethnic identification are not important solely for identity construction and the sense of belonging but also for economic survival. As Branch (2011, 293–294) has suggested, ethnicity is not the cause but a symptom of a weak sense of nationhood and a non-redistributive state that does not even out the colossal gaps between narrow elites and the poor masses. In contexts where state formation processes have been constructed through colonial conquest and violence as well as various forms of neocolonial dependency relations, people tend to identify with other kinds of collectivities rather than with the state. Branch (2011, 293) continues that what ethnicity brings to the people is what the state does not: trust.

> In the absence of redistribution, ethnicity provided a way in which Kenyans could access and protect the scarce resources of land, jobs and political power. The networks of kin encouraged by ethnicity provided for access to plots of land, work and housing on a reciprocal basis. The networks of patronage meant that, if their political leader became an MP or a minister (or even president), then the roads in their district might be repaired, the moribund local factory rejuvenated or the village school expanded. Ethnicity was not irrational and nor was it an expression of traditionalism; instead it was a logical response to an experience of the modern world in which resources are scarce...
> BRANCH 2011, 294

Consequently, "ethnic identification keeps together a 'moral community' which often, and especially in times of crisis, provides support and functions as the sounding board for communal values and experience" (Frederiksen 2010, 1074). Yet, at the same time, the "politicization of ethnicity has been a key technique

used by the changing political regimes and elites first in colonial, then in post-colonial Kenya" (ibid., 1073). Branch (2011, 16–17) has suggested that elites have encouraged political identification and action first and foremost through ethnicity, "in order to crush demands for the redistribution of scarce resources". In other words, ethnicity is used by elites and other groups in order to avoid addressing larger structural issues connected with poverty and inequality, namely, those related to the redistribution of lands, means of production, jobs and political power.

The way public resources are distributed through patrimonial relationships, that again generate ethnic divisions, seems to link the accounts of these two young men. An institutionalized state apparatus that is driven by civil servants and policies is the missing link here, I would argue, rather than just possibilities for the young to participate. A public sector that is truly democratic rather than patrimonial might be what is needed before young aspiring politicians have a real chance, regardless of class or ethnic belonging. Based on my interviews, unfortunately the training workshops organized by the NGOs also focus on the capabilities of individual youths but overlook the structural and institutional issues of the public sector which seems to enable or hamper youth participation, and cause so much frustration.

Conclusions

This chapter has investigated how politically active young Kenyans describe and understand the difficulties that they face when they participate in party politics and are struggling to find a way into parliamentary political forums. Although already widely discussed in academic literature on African politics, I chose to focus on the topics of political patronage and ethnicity because of their overwhelming presence in the narratives of those politically active young Kenyans with whom I interviewed and interacted. By focusing especially on the narratives of Garakilo and John, this chapter has showed that despite the assumedly youth-inclusive political shift, young people active in party politics continue to experience various forms of obstacles and exclusions in their political careers.

Through Garakilo's discussion of political patronage one is tempted to reach the conclusion that as long as the distribution of state, municipal and other resources is dependent on individual political leaders rather than formal, institutionalized mechanisms through which state benefits and services find their ways to citizens on an equal basis, it will be difficult for young people to challenge the logics of political patronage. And, at the moment, as Ake (2003, 116)

has put it: "the state is not so much a reality as a hope..." While party politics has opened up forums for youth political engagement and inclusion, especially in pre-electoral periods, young men and women have hard time breaking through to positions of power due to their lack of resources and political authority both at local and national political levels. Unless already intertwined in political networks through family ties, young people have little room for manoeuvre in party politics without the protection of wealthy political patrons. Until state resources are distributed in an institutionalized manner rather than on patrimonial principles, young political leaders, when they finally enter political positions of power, risk becoming exactly like their elders, because the room for change seems so narrow and unrealistic. The capacity-building workshops organized by the NGOs could be an arena where this is tackled realistically and across party lines, as it frustrates youth regardless of party affiliation. Yet structural issues have to be discussed in training sessions as well.

The other side of the coin of political patronage is the co-option and manipulation of youth for the purposes of serving the interests of party elites. They are most often senior male leaders of their respective ethnic groups. Ethnicity forms an important source of identity and establishes a sense of belonging to a collectivity. Yet throughout Kenyan history, from colonialism to contemporary centralized presidentialism, there have been attempts by those in power to congeal fluid identities into fixed ethnic categories in order to serve elite interests: to protect and to accumulate wealth and to obstruct any attempts at challenging elite privileges ideologically and through structural reforms. Through John's views on ethnicity in Kenyan politics it was demonstrated that in this kind of political situation young men and women tend to be co-opted into ethnic networks. Instead of allying with other youth on the basis of common issues or ideology, they are used by senior party leaders to agitate ethnic hatred and violence against each other.

However, this was not the whole truth. As mentioned earlier, while politically active young Kenyans talked a lot about the importance of ethnicity in politics, three of my informants did not in fact belong to the parties that were most closely identified with their ethnic backgrounds. All of them came from politically marginalized ethnic groups, but were now supporting either the TNA or the URP, leading parties of the governing regime. It is difficult to say whether this signalled political opportunism towards those in power or whether it hinted that while ethnicity played a major role in political discourses as a categorically stagnant concept, it was performed fluidly in the everyday political practices of young Kenyans. Ultimately, youth lives appeared more complex than their discourses.

So, what will the future hold for such politically active young Kenyans as Garakilo and John? They were both hoping that issues other than money or ethnicity would determine the course of future politics in Kenya. They were expecting that in the future, Kenyan political parties would become formally organized and transparent institutions in which leadership positions would rotate democratically among all interested party members. Garakilo, who had had the experience of his party winning the elections, was, however, quite sceptical about whether these dreams would ever be realized. He perceived the youth to be as equally ethnically divided as older generations and considered ethnicity to be very deeply inscribed in Kenyan politics. However, despite all the disappointments he had faced in his own community and at national political forums, his last remark to me was that he might, nevertheless, consider contesting in the next elections. This showed that he still cherished a spark of hope for change.

John, for his part, was hopeful all the way. So far his party had been unsuccessful in winning parliamentary and presidential elections. Consequently, he still had the anticipation that, if that day comes, his party would do things differently. He was, however, fearful of political violence. He felt that the resentment caused by constant exclusion of young men and women in general – and more specifically of those belonging to politically marginalized ethnic groups and the political opposition – was a real danger. To avoid this, he tried to engage himself in constant dialogue between young men and women from other political parties and ethnic groups. And he was convinced that when he ruled, hopefully from the 2017 elections onwards, *he* would do things differently.

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Political Violence in Zimbabwe's National Youth Service, 2001–2007

Ivo Mhike

Introduction

This chapter is about Zimbabwean youths and their relationship with the state. It examines how the Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU (PF)) party / state coerced youths into participating in agendas that enhanced the political party's stranglehold on power. The study argues that some youth participation in Zimbabwean politics, though active, was sometimes involuntary largely because economic and social developments constrained them to cyclical poverty and predisposed them to manipulation by those in positions of power. Political leadership played a subversive role in manipulating youths to further its political objectives through violence.

I will argue in this chapter that the National Youth Service (NYS), a state-run programme introduced in 2001, was little more than a ZANU (PF) party instrument for mobilizing and channelling youthful political participation. The Zimbabwe NYS became a potent tool of violence and brutality which was used against the governing party's opponents. However, existing literature is unmindful of the fact that NYS youths were also victims of a party / state system that manipulated their economic vulnerability and inadequate life chances.

The NYS was introduced at a time when Zimbabwe was, arguably, experiencing its worst socio-economic crises since independence in 1980. Ironically, the state used the NYS programme as a de facto 'rite of passage' for youth access to tertiary education, jobs in the civil service and state funded youth economic empowerment programmes; it became a vital cog in ZANU (PF) politics of patronage whereby young people were rewarded for toeing the party line, while in the media and other literature these youths were presented as willing agents and perpetrators of violence, mobilized as part of repressive state machinery. This chapter nuances this picture by analysing the unequal power relations between youths, the state and other social groups, and examines how the young people endeavoured to navigate economic and political constraints.

It must be highlighted at this point that political patronage, youth violence and state attempts at institutionalizing or indoctrinating youths in Zimbabwe

were not peculiar to the new millennium. Youth violence was a fundamental instrument for nationalist movements in mobilizing for the war effort during the liberation struggle against British colonialism in the 1960s and 1970s. Post-independence presidential and parliamentary elections have witnessed varying degrees of violence, largely perpetrated by youths. Three key elements emerged regarding ZANU (PF)'s treatment of youths and its political opponents and these became firmly established during the 1980s. First, party leaders expected total youth allegiance, loyalty and a strict adherence to instruction. A hierarchical leadership style was adopted. Secondly, in enforcing loyalty among the youths, ZANU (PF) operated politics of patronage. Government loans and other empowerment programmes were prerogatives of these youths and served as reward for allegiance to the party (Madondo 2008). Thirdly, ZANU (PF) regarded political opposition with open hostility and young people have consistently been used as tools for political violence. In the same manner in which this revolutionary party demanded cooperation from the masses during the liberation struggle in the 1960 and 1970s, any opinions diverging from its agendas after independence were viewed with intolerance. However, I acknowledge that the magnitude of pre-election violence worsened after 2000.

The NYS was first authorized in 1979 by the National Service Act, passed by the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government. The 2001 National Youth Service was a sequel to the Youth Brigades' movement of the 1980s where ZANU (PF) increasingly institutionalized and controlled the aspirations of euphoric and potentially dangerous young people soon after the war. Brigades were involved in mobilizing meetings for the ZANU party and committed acts of violence in the 1985 election. In the Matabeleland massacres some 20,000 people were killed and 30,000 were injured or displaced by 1988 (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace 1997). Muzondidya notes that the post-colonial Zimbabwean state was authoritarian and repressive and it used both violence and a hegemonic discourse of unity on its official opposition, workers, students and youth groups (Muzondidya 2009, 177–198).

Methodology

The research project presented in this chapter adopted the mixed methods approach in generating data. It involved textual and content analysis of documents on the NYS produced and disseminated in professional, political and public circles in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2009. The material included policy documents, government reports and non-governmental organizations' reports. In addition, I consulted newspaper articles which showed both broad public opinion and professional positions on youth, and the NYS programme

in particular. In line with Hooder (2000, 704), I examined the social construction of youth within these documents and analysed them in the context of their conditions of production. I also used interpretive analysis (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998; Riessman 1993) to detect the sources and the nature of the framing of youth and policy. In addition to textual analysis, I explored how the framing of youth by the state has influenced youth policy in the post-2000 period.

I also generated data through in-depth interviews between January and August 2014 with six former NYS members (three females and three males) on their lived experiences. All my respondents were below the age of 30 and lived in rural and farming areas at the time of joining the NYS. Initially, my sample size was 12 but after the first six I realized that I was getting almost identical narratives from my respondents notwithstanding the fact that they trained at different centres. I also interviewed four victims of NYS brutality (two males and two females). The sample size for victims was small because numerous non-governmental organizations (NGO) reports have already documented injuries and other statistics. However, the use of interviews had limitations. Zimbabwe is a highly polarized political environment which also impacted on the interviews and people's willingness to participate. In my case, once I was able to interview a couple of individuals, I was able to connect to a wider network. It is impossible to know if people answered truthfully, or if those who chose not to respond to certain questions were more prone to violence than those who responded in full. Ethical considerations of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality and rights of withdrawal were shared with all research participants and I have employed the use of pseudonyms to protect the identities of my participants. This chapter uses the past tense consistently in the entire text, but this does not suggest that all of the features of Zimbabwean society I describe are confined to history. However, the data I used cannot make claims about the contemporary situation even if some descriptions may still be accurate.

Agency, Youth and the Zimbabwe NYS

Analysis of youth political engagements in Zimbabwe under the NYS programme offers perspectives on fundamental questions regarding the role of youth in contemporary African democracies. From the colonial to the post-colonial political dispensations, young people have figured prominently with their energies being harnessed by political bodies to advance different agendas. Progressively, African governments have failed to meet their growing

populations' needs for social services such as youth employment, health and education. This study explores the extent to which poverty and unemployment amongst the youths are political tools of state coercion in contemporary African societies. The findings suggest that the ruling elite use state institutions to manipulate vulnerable youths to achieve political goals that do not benefit the nation.

The Zimbabwean case demonstrates the permeability of notions of victim and perpetrator in youths' lived experiences. While I acknowledge that participants of the NYS were part of the rank and file of a violent, coercive and authoritarian regime (which included the police, army, Central Intelligence Organization, war veterans and the ZANU (PF) youth wing), I also postulate that the youths were an appropriated tool who occupied an interstitial position between victim and perpetrator (Honwana and De Boeck 2005). Given their circumstances of poverty and vulnerability some of these youths were simultaneously unwilling but active participants in state-sponsored violence. Furthermore, the study attempts to highlight the peculiarities of the Zimbabwean version of national youth service compared with those that exist elsewhere in Africa and how it may have deviated from the norm.

Little academic attention has been paid to the ambiguities inherent in NYS graduates' lived experiences, and the Zimbabwe NYS has largely been documented by NGOs working on the political and human rights situation in Zimbabwe (The Solidarity Peace Trust 2003; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation 2009). Following Zimbabwe's economic and social crisis, which began around 1998 and intensified post-2000, the country's political situation also came under closer international scrutiny over governance and human rights concerns (Raftopoulos 2009). For example, its human rights record was criticized by organizations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and The United Nations Refugee Agency, among others. These organizations compiled statistics of rights abuses, the nature of abuses and the magnitude of the political and social crises in Zimbabwe. Beyond NGO reports, local and international private media documented state-sponsored violence. These reports reflect how the NYS youths were violators of human rights in Zimbabwe (*Daily News*, 30 January 2002; *Zimbabwe Independent*, 02 August 2001).

State terror was a multi-layered system but no meaningful analysis has so far been made of the power relations between and amongst the groups involved, ultimately giving the impression of a cohesive monolith whose elements, though not having equal claim to power, embraced the same world view and ideologies. To a large measure, reports overlooked the perpetual underlying tensions and vulnerabilities which may have held the system together. This analytical weakness is partly underpinned by the fact that the reports mainly

focused on the activities of the youths after their NYS training in order to expose the political crisis in Zimbabwe and attract the attention of the international community. At the other extreme, state-controlled media reports presented the NYS as the ideal model of progressive youth.

This study shows that the graduates of the NYS programme exercised limited agency in their violent actions against ZANU (PF) party opponents. Giddens defines agency as:

> the capability of doing something rather than the intention to do something. Agency concerns events which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in the given sequence of events have acted differently. Whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened.
>
> GIDDENS 1984, 42

This definition offers the basis for the vilification of acts of violence by national service youth, underlining their role as active perpetrators of atrocities. This is largely because acts of violence are taken as events without determining the social processes informing them.

However, I suggest here that the analytical gaze should go beyond these seemingly voluntary acts of violence and also view the power relations that influence youth involvement in politics. Measuring agency through actions alone assumes that social groups have equal power in any political establishment; however, although the youths were 'agents' of state power they occupied the lower ranks in the power hierarchy. Young people generally hold less power in any political system than adults or elders. For example, disaffected youth spearheaded protests and the overthrow of regimes in Egypt and Tunisia but the more established parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood had the leadership and experienced political machinery to co-opt the process of state-building for their own goals (Schwartz 2011).

African Youth and Political Violence

Academic and popular interest in youth as a category is growing worldwide. In demographical estimations, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15–24 globally, of which 19% live on the African continent (UN 2015). In Africa, youth has increasingly become a subject of social inquiry particularly in political conflicts for democratization (Seekings 1993; Glaser 2000; Marks 2001) and armed

conflicts (Richards 1995; Abdullah and Bangura 1997; Vigh 2006; Honwana 2006). The Youth Bulge theory is also used to explain youthful social turbulence (Urdal 2012). More recently, youths have been identified as catalysts of protest and violence in the Arab Spring (Schwartz 2011), as well as agents of change and reconstruction (Schwartz 2010). Young people are seen as critical players whose economic demands and social influences have impact on local societies as well as on global trends. In particular, young people have reconfigured the "geographies of exclusion and inclusion" (Honwana and De Boeck 2005, 1), putting new focus on their endeavours to negotiate confining structures and navigate economic, social and political problems.

However, Coulter (1998) notes that the emergent influence of the young stands side by side with their limited role under unrelenting state political power. In this regard, they are subjected to the whims of the state in discourses of social control in many different contexts. In this theme, young people's participation in political and electoral violence has been presented as a major effect of their political, economic and social exclusion (UNDP 2006; Nordic Africa Institute 2012). Increasingly, political violence by the young has emerged as a tool in monopolizing state power in sub-Saharan Africa. Meanwhile, evidence suggests that although opinions vary on why youths engage in political violence, rational economic opportunity and greed play a significant part (Mutto 2007).

The Zimbabwe NYS and the Socio-political Context

To get a grasp of the attraction of the Zimbabwe National Youth Service, it is necessary to understand who the participating youths were. Zimbabwean youths are a heterogeneous category and the socio-economic crisis of the post 2000 period exacerbated their political, socio-economic and geographical differences. Participants in the NYS were unemployed males and females aged between 15 and 30 years mainly from embattled rural peasant homesteads and households, and resettled farming communities. These young people had diverse educational backgrounds and comprised school leavers, school dropouts, the underqualified and the semi-literate. At the time of my interviews, all my respondents were residing in urban areas because of work commitments. Although none of my respondents were over 30 years of age, I do not suggest that those over 30 years did not participate in the programme. The ZANU (PF) party operated on the basis of a curious discursive construction of youth where the policy limit was 30 years (National Youth Policy 2000) and yet the

political party's National Youth Secretary, Absolom Sikhosana, was 64 years old when he was eventually replaced in 2014 after being at the helm for 15 years. In addition, it was not uncommon to find 40 and 50-year-olds holding positions in party youth structures (*The Financial Gazette*, 21 August 2014).

Zimbabwe is in sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated population of 15.7 million (Government of Zimbabwe Central Statistics Report 2016), and a speculative 4 million in the diaspora. In the post-2000 period Zimbabwe's poor economic performance and the concomitant social strife characterized by poor service delivery and unemployment created an increasingly restive society. By 2008 Zimbabwe's hyperinflation reached a record 230 million per cent and the 2006 GDP per capita was 47 per cent lower than 1980 levels (Raftopoulos 2009). By 2008 unemployment figures were above the 80 percent mark. Opposition to the ruling ZANU (PF) party was growing and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party, formed in 1999, won 57 of the 120 contested seats in the 2000 parliamentary elections, a factor which made the 2002 presidential elections difficult to predict (Raftopoulos 2009, 215). During the entire 2000s the MDC was a serious threat to ZANU (PF) political power.

School leavers and college graduates without jobs formed the bulk of the opposition support base. Zimbabwe churns out some 300,000 school leavers annually. As a percentage of the population the 15–35 age group is at 50 percent of the population (Government of Zimbabwe Census Report 2013). It was for this age group that the NYS was intended because their demographic composition was a critical factor in democratic elections. The potential for political change lay with the young (Marks 1992). Ironically, the NYS was started some months before the 2002 presidential elections. The NYS programme largely recruited from rural and farming areas where ZANU (PF) traditionally enjoyed large support. In contrast, the MDC, because of its alliance with labour unions, was seen as an 'urban' party with a large support base in cities.

The governing party harnessed the energies of young people and channelled them into an NYS programme in order to stem the swelling opposition party base from gaining ground in rural areas and to forestall the trajectory of change threatening its policies. The NYS became an instrument of social control that benefitted the party. Its curriculum was generated from within party structures and was never tabled before parliament. This increased the possibility of youth political indoctrination for single party ends. Effectively, the NYS became a parallel state structure. Raftopoulos (2013, 16) argues that "over the last three decades of post-colonial rule in Zimbabwe, ZANU (PF) has steadily conflated its existence with that of the state leading to its current incarnation into a party / state". This is not a recent development as the 1980s have also been characterized as a time of a de facto one party state (Sithole and Makumbe 1997, 122–123).

NYS graduates became notorious for violence, terrorizing the nation with murder, rape, beatings, abductions, looting, torture and arson. They rehearsed the ZANU (PF) rhetoric of defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Zimbabwe against 'Western sponsored elements', meaning opposition political parties and any dissenting voice. To further buttress this position, ZANU (PF) castigated opposition parties and civil society as surrogates of Western governments which desired to reverse the gains of independence such as the land reform of 2000 (Raftopoulos 2009). Opposition to the NYS highlighted that the programme was not serving national but parochial political party interests as youths were indoctrinated into believing that ZANU (PF), as one of the leading liberation movements, was the custodian of the country's independence, with the only right to rule. As part of these ideologies, the definitions of party and state were blurred and any opposition to ZANU (PF) was considered the work of 'enemies of the state'. In this context, national service youths were conceptualized as progenitors of state power, being mobilized in the context of a repressive state.

Initially the NYS programme was supposed to be voluntary and small scale, with its principal aims focusing on skills enhancement and moral education. Shortly after its inception, however, ZANU (PF) unilaterally decided to make the NYS a large-scale programme which also included paramilitary training. The state as the main duty bearer for youth social protection ostensibly wanted to use the NYS to empower the youths through skills training and values like patriotism and discipline. However, the merits of the NYS were never tabled before parliament although the ZANU (PF) cabinet approved its curriculum and allocated it a budget (Madondo 2008). ZANU (PF) obscurantism with regards inquiry into the details of the programme increased opposition and suspicion.

Although officially the state only encouraged those aged 15–30 to go through the NYS before enrolling in tertiary education or joining the public service (*The Chronicle*, 23 February 2003), this was tantamount to forcing them because the NYS certificate became a de facto requirement for entry into tertiary education and the public service job market. In Zimbabwe's harsh economic environment, characterized by rampant corruption and poverty, for some youths the NYS presented the only avenue for social and economic mobility. Herein lay one of the unique features of the Zimbabwean NYS and the centre-piece of state manipulation and coercion. To make a comparison: in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Egypt, for example, national youth service is mandatory, but one can take up the programme after acquiring a tertiary education. As Obadare argues, national youth service as a government mandated programme is open to misuse and exploitation by governing bodies (Obadare 2010, 27). The Zimbabwean case represented a scenario where state resources and institutions were used to drive party political agendas.

Recruitment for the NYS

Launched in August 2001 with 1,000 youths at the Border Gezi Training Centre in Mt Darwin, by January 2002 training was provided in eight provinces. By the end of 2004, it is estimated that around 22,000 youths had passed through formal training in the five main camps, with more trained at district level (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation 2009). By 2007 some 50,000 had passed through these camps but it remains unclear how many youths were trained (Madondo 2008). Compared to national youth service programmes elsewhere in Africa which sought to mould an all-round citizen and transcend social class boundaries (Obadare 2010), the Zimbabwean version was unique in the sense that it was designed to capture the vulnerable groups. Despite all the government rhetoric championing the programme as one aimed at all youths, in April 2001 the newly appointed Minister of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation emphasized that NYS recruits would "include unemployed youths, orphans, single mothers and street kids". In October 2000, *The Herald*, the state-run newspaper, claimed that the NYS was "capable of curbing youth delinquency" (*The Herald*, 13 October 2000).

Geographically, all the youth training centres were located in the rural areas. Two reasons may explain this disparity between town and country: first, over 60 percent of Zimbabweans lived in the countryside (Government of Zimbabwe Census Report 2013) and the location of the youth centres was convenient for rural youths; second, and perhaps more importantly, the countryside was traditionally the heart of the governing party's support base and recruiting rural youths was critical in mobilizing it.

Unemployed rural youth were more likely to join the NYS programme compared to their urban counterparts. Edith Munhande, a 35-year-old female, born and raised in a rural district in Southern Zimbabwe, joined the programme in 2003 at the age of 24 because of her social and economic circumstances.

> I spend 4 years looking for a job after successfully completing my ordinary level education. I was getting tired of it and decided to join NYS as a last resort because people were doing it with the promise of getting employment in the civil service. I was the eldest of three children and was under pressure to marry and also support my parents with my other two siblings' school fees. There was nothing else I could do; my parents were just peasant farmers. (Interview with Edith Munhande [female], 12/06/2014)

In the above case, the gender expectations of marriage compounded the untenable economic circumstances which pressured some young females to take

up the NYS. By the time Edith got a job in the civil service in 2004 her NYS certificate was not required, but she was quick to reiterate that some of her colleagues from her training camp had been able to enrol for the nursing service and teacher training because of the NYS and after a previous unsuccessful attempt. One can extrapolate to say that Edith's circumstances were not unique and many female youths found themselves in the frustrating inertia of having unmet gendered social expectations while facing delays in achieving adulthood though economic independence (Christiansen et al. 2006). It appears Edith joined the NYS to escape the former and achieve the latter, albeit without guarantee of success. In light of the shrinking economy, the private sector was struggling to cope and the public sector was increasingly becoming the single largest recruiter. This dovetailed with government plans to force youths to join the NYS in order to stand a chance of getting jobs. For some, the NYS became a vehicle to escape social inertia, particularly its economic problems.

Others state that they joined the NYS in 2005 reluctantly, in spite of the economic opportunity it presented. Nigel Sibanda (male, 32 years) who was 23 at the time of enrolling admitted that, "It was a very difficult decision to make because NYS graduates were hated, labelled ZANU (PF) supporters and were called all sorts of names in our area but I wanted to get a job. Two of my friends had joined the police force because of the NYS" (Interview with Nigel Sibanda [male], 16/05/2014). At the time of the interview, Nigel was working for a government ministry and was certain that he got the job because of the NYS because those who did not have the certificate were not accepted. Consequently, some youths became unwilling but active participants in the NYS programme. Some simply perceived the programme as a means to an end, and therefore were a potent but appropriated tool of violence.

By making the NYS a 'rite of passage' the state accentuated youth vulnerabilities to state power and created a youth dependent on the state and enhanced state control. ZANU (PF) manipulated state power, the economic down turn and social strife to stand between the youths and their opportunity for economic advancement, career development and, in some cases, basic survival. Much as some youths may not have believed the philosophy of the values of patriotism, citizenship and sovereignty as defined and advanced by ZANU (PF), their dependent position on state power left them with little choice but to join the politically focused NYS programme.

Moreover, social power relations at the family level further influenced the decision to join the NYS. Beyond state power and economic incentive, some youths enrolled in the NYS 'voluntarily' because their parents or guardians were ZANU (PF) supporters and 'encouraged' them to enrol. ZANU (PF) members, who held positions within party structures, especially in the rural areas, would sometimes send their children to join the NYS as a gesture of their 'patriotism'

and unfailing allegiance to the party. Party officials were duty bound to encourage youths in their areas to join the national programme, feeling it would appear hypocritical to keep their own children at home. Julia Saga's uncle was in the party's District Commissariat, and pressured her into joining the NYS in 2002.

> I enrolled with the first group to train at Mshagashe Training Centre at the age of 19. When the training centre was opened, my uncle was part of the team that was tasked to mobilize the requisite number of youth recruits for training. He would always vow that [Province] would not be a failure because that would reflect badly on their leadership. It also became his personal battle because there were others who were after his position within the district political structures. (Interview with Julia Saga [female], 24/07/2014)

Members of the party acted as state agents in their localities to compel youths to join the NYS programme. In certain other cases, families compelled their children to join the NYS to make the family immune to suspicion of being MDC supporters. Election time generally produced a politically charged atmosphere. The terror caused by the ZANU (PF) machinery bred fear and suspicion. Individuals and families would accuse each other of being MDC supporters and 'sell-outs'. Therefore, having a family member in the NYS was a deterrent to potential violence and suspicion.

The coercion of youths into joining the NYS took various forms; there are reports of youths having been kidnapped by state agents into the NYS training programme. The magnitude of coercion and its effects on youth is captured in the following statement; "In some rural areas, youths who refuse(d) to volunteer for the training are victimized; young people have fled to avoid the training and the persecution / lack of opportunity that accompany not having completed it" (Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, 22). In view of this fact, the decision to join the NYS was not up to the individual who had to contend with social relational issues and state power, security and economic pressure.

Training

The youth training period was three months followed by a mandatory community project for one month in recruits' localities. Principally, NYS training focused on five values: National Identity, Patriotism, Unity and Oneness, Discipline and Self Reliance (Government of Zimbabwe NYS Manual 2001, 6).

The training camps also involved morning runs, chores and marching drills which resembled para-military training (Shumba 2006, 44). The NYS became a model of state coercion of youth into accepting certain political views and political culture because the above-mentioned values were interpreted according to ZANU (PF) party philosophies.

After ZANU (PF)'s poor electoral performance in the parliamentary elections of 2000, the party generated a coercive and hegemonic discourse which involved the resurgence of debates and the formulation of new discourses on patriotic youths, citizenship and sovereignty. Patriotism and citizenship were unequivocally equated with supporting the ZANU (PF) party agenda and its self-proclaimed position as custodian of Zimbabwe's independence. This new discourse was exclusionary, and political opposition was subjected to vilification and open hostility. The overall goal was to regain lost political ground under the challenge of the MDC by creating new ideas which would serve as a rallying point in the 'new' Zimbabwe with ZANU (PF) as the leading political party. The NYS became a model of state coercion of youth into accepting certain political views and political culture. Nathan Chegu revealed:

> We were taught the history of Zimbabwe and the cruelties of white colonial rule, land dispossession and how our ancestors toiled under the colonial yoke. More importantly, we were reminded of the sacrifices that our heroes, both living and dead, made to achieve peace and freedom. Lessons were drawn on how the youths ought to emulate the leadership of the President [Robert Mugabe] and support his vision for a better Zimbabwe. We were also taught to be vigilant against surrogates of Western governments and sell-outs who are agents of neo-colonialism. (Interview with Nathan Chegu [male], 16/07/2014)

Adjectives like 'surrogate' and 'sell-out' were used in reference to collaborators in the colonial liberation struggle and had been adopted to identify opposition party supporters, especially MDC supporters, in order to legitimize ZANU (PF) hostility. Nathan emphasized that history was drilled into their heads so much that he began to believe that the white man and everything associated with him was his perpetual enemy. It is critical to note that the same language and tactics used by guerrillas in the liberation war in the 1970s (Second Chimurenga) was used by the NYS graduates. In its battle for power against opposition political parties, ZANU (PF) perceived itself as being at 'war' with agents of white interests and was determined to weed out all 'collaborators' and 'sell-outs' through violent means. Supporters of the main opposition party and the single largest threat to ZANU (PF)'s strangle hold on power since the

1980s, the MDC, were, therefore, labelled 'enemies of the state' who were allegedly against the post 2000 land redistribution exercise referred to as the 'third Chimurenga' (Government of Zimbabwe NYS Manual 2001).

As Obadare (2010, 27) argues, youth movements are a vehicle used by governments to cultivate 'good' citizenship's being premised on loyalty and thus open to indoctrination with regards to that loyalty. However, there is every possibility that some went into the NYS unwillingly but were converted to the ideologies and doctrines of the programme. According to Rejoice Shumba (2006), indoctrination in the NYS in Zimbabwe camps ended up creating a group identity espousing the notions of 'self' and 'other.' The youths were made to feel that they were the educators of the masses and that it was their duty to safeguard the country from Western 'surrogates' and 'sell-outs' even through the use of violence.

Beyond the ideological aspects, NYS training camp conditions were a subject of concern for human rights activists. There were allegations of rape of female recruits by their male counterparts and tutors. The gender violence issue in the camps added another dimension to youth brutalization. In the politicized camps the majority of cases went unreported because victims feared reprisals. Some of the reported cases have not been tried in the courts of law (Solidarity Peace Trust 2003). ZANU (PF) blocked calls for inquiry into the workings and problems of NYS camps because cases of abuse would add women's organizations to the list of critics. All my respondents professed ignorance of the existence of such cases during their training periods.

Human rights reports also highlighted the poor food and shelter provision in the camps as another serious violation of youth rights. Most of the training camps did not have adequate accommodation for the large numbers of numbers of youths in training and overcrowding was a common feature. Edith claimed that her group numbered about 500 youths at a facility designed for about two hundred (Interview with Edith Munhande, 12/06/2014). In addition, the dietary structure was poor and inconsistent with the physical demands of the training.

> During the first month of training meals were consistent with porridge after our dawn road run and tea at 10 am. However, bread was not guaranteed anyone. By the third month of training in November of 2004 meals had become so inconsistent that at one point we went for three days on porridge only. I remember one boy who could not handle it deserted [laughter]. We could not complain about the situation because the administrators of the programme would say the programme was voluntary and one was free to leave if they so desired. But, of course, no one left because of fear of possible retribution. (Interview with Regis Ruvando [male], 04/06/2014)

However, Julia Saga and Rufaro Ngezi had a different opinion about the situation in their camp which they claimed was well provided with food, accommodation and uniforms. Two reasons may explain this difference in experiences. Julia and Rufaro were part of the first groups to train at Mshagashe and Dadaya training centres, respectively, and, possibly, the initial camp budgets were adequate. However, as the number of youths in the camps increased and the national economic situation continued to weaken, by 2004 when Regis enrolled conditions in the camps had deteriorated.

Regis, in the quote above, raises the critical issue of desertion. Once in the camp, it was difficult to make the decision to leave if conditions were unsuitable. Deserters could not guarantee their own safety and had to live in hiding. According to the Solidarity Peace Report (2003, 57):

> Both within and outside Zimbabwe, youth who have abandoned their militia camps live in fear of retribution and only speak out reluctantly. Defected militia, who have fled to Johannesburg, live in fear of retribution if they return to Zimbabwe; even in Johannesburg they report that they are not safe from the Zimbabwean CIO [Central Intelligence Organization].

Life after Training

The youths were obliged to perform one month of community service in their localities before proceeding with tertiary education or getting jobs in the civil service. The reality of the Zimbabwe crisis was that many schemes were defunct and, instead, youths were principally tasked with educating the masses about ZANU (PF) rhetoric on the dangers of supporting the Western-allied MDC party and the merits of supporting the revolutionary ZANU (PF) party. Armed with political education blended with para-military training these youths were given carte blanche to operate in communities as political educators of the masses who wanted to 'sell-out' (vote for opposition parties).

It was during this period of 'conscientization' and 're-education' of the people that the youths committed acts of terror. 'Re-education' and the 'encouragement' of sell-outs to be patriotic was mere euphemism for the brutalization and forced support for ZANU (PF). Youth violence was central in the 2002 presidential and 2005 parliamentary and the 2008 harmonized presidential and parliamentary elections in which ZANU (PF) emerged victorious. In the run-up to the 2005 parliamentary election, Loyce Chingwe and Maxwell Zhare were detained by NYS youths at their base camp and were beaten so severely that Maxwell was hospitalized with a broken arm (Interviews with Loyce Chingwe

(female, 40) and Maxwell Zhare (male, 47), 27/08/2014). NYS graduates became a constant reminder of ZANU (PF)'s heavy-handedness, brutality and political intolerance in the communities in which they operated where they were harbingers of fear, brutality and tension. The youths believed they had wide powers in their operations. One NYS graduate confessed (male, 25) in a report:

> We got a lot of power. Our source of power was this encouragement we were getting, particularly from the police and others. We were getting this power and it was instilled in us that whenever we go out, we are free to do whatever we want and nobody was going to question that.
>
>   Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, 82

Whether real or imagined these wide-ranging powers, coupled with the effervescence of youth, gave the NYS graduates a newly-found social status at a time when the economic and social reality of Zimbabwean society was limiting. Their actions reinforced the social image of youth as violent and the role of youth in contemporary African politics as nothing more than a tool of violence (Seekings 1993; Hirschfeld 2002; Igbinovia 1998, 134). Given their poor socio-economic backgrounds, desperation and desire to make a life breakthrough, the young appropriated the programme to refashion themselves in an environment of social strife. The new identity was expressed in committing acts of violence and intimidation to the extent that some were given over to a life of banditry and brigandage.

The above quotation assumes that youths had power and agency. However, they could not disobey instructions for fear of being labelled 'sell-outs' themselves. This conforms to observations by Honwana and De Boeck (2005) to the effect that youth are both 'makers' and 'breakers' in society and also 'made' and 'broken' by the same society. In this light, the youths had agency to operate and maximize their impact in the most immediate environment but could not guarantee their security once they disobeyed orders. Therefore, they traversed a very thin line between total obedience and being labelled charlatans. As a result, some youths were trapped into aiding the 'terror machinery' out of fear and anxiety about antagonizing their superiors and jeopardizing their physical safety and job security.

There was also an economic explanation to youth violence. The NYS enforced government policy on price control in a hyper inflationary environment, distributed government food relief and convened and mobilized for ZANU (PF) political meetings. Out of envy and jealousy some NYS youth also falsely accused shop owners or traders of hoarding scarce commodities so as to justify dispossessing them of their goods. Emilia recalled:

> My father had always been accused of selling MDC party cards and on one particular day National Service youths came to our shop and accused my father of sabotaging the government by hoarding cooking oil and selling it at exorbitant prices. They threatened to beat him up and eventually decided to loot the shop. He did not even make a report to the police because we all knew that it was going to be a waste of time. The police were not going to do anything about it. (Interview with Emilia Mudiwa [female], 12/06/2014)

Basic commodities were in short supply and when available they were very expensive. Shop owners charged exorbitant prices on commodities to stay in business because the supply chain was riddled with corruption (Jones 2010, 285–299). In this respect, victimization of business people was sometimes perpetrated on economic and not political grounds. Therefore, youth actions were a blend of petty jealousies, expressions of social and political identity and a means of personal aggrandizement.

In maximizing their newly found power, some NS youths would label their family enemies as MDC supporters in order to settle old scores. In this volatile political environment, it became dangerous for unemployed youths below 30 years of age to stay at home without joining either the ZANU (PF) youth league or the NYS. It was interpreted as contempt for ZANU (PF) party programmes and a show of sympathy for the MDC. However, communities generally feared and loathed NYS graduates because they would accuse people of all sorts of wrongdoing. NYS youth became pariahs in communities they intended to 'serve'. For example, opponents of the NYS programme pejoratively labelled NYS youth 'green bombers', referring to their military green uniforms and equating their presence and activities with the green bottle fly, a pest which feeds on faeces and dead animal carcasses and transfers pathogens to humans (Interview with Obert Chikomba [male], 22/05/2014). The name reflected the strong revulsion and resentment with which sections of Zimbabwean society regarded the NYS programme. For many, its members were anathema and became subjected to pervasive social stigma.

Conclusion

The Zimbabwe NYS highlights youths' predicament in contemporary Africa's political, social and economic process. State structures make use of youth vulnerabilities and even ensure that youths are amenable to control and abuse by those in authority. Youth are viewed as a threat by their governments

(Obadare 2010). The NYS became a model of state coercion of youth into accepting certain political views and a particular political culture. Consistent with politics of patronage, the policy blended coercion and incentive. The NYS raises the question of whose interests policies are meant to serve, especially given the lack of trust which exists between governments and their people and the lack of proper consultation in policy formation (Sinha-Kerkhof 2011). The NYS uses and reinforces the image of youths as violent and vulnerable at the same time (Hirschfeld 2002; Igbinovia 1998, 134). Poor youths from rural environments and females often had no choice but join the NYS. Furthermore, young people's experiences with the NYS disassemble the binaries of victim and agent and highlight the fluidity of such identities (Honwana 2005). Although youths were subject to coercion, they were not always passive conformers to the state's social engineering strategies. Some negotiated within and outside the frame constructed by the state and it is from this interaction that the boundaries between agent and victim became convoluted.

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Students' Participation in and Contribution to Political and Social Change in Ethiopia

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Introduction

The future of any society depends on the next generation. Thus, providing individuals access to education and opportunities for participating in a country's development should be considered a necessity. In Ethiopia until the end of the 19th century, however, there was only traditional education, which was virtually controlled by the Orthodox Church. Modern education was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century when Emperor Menelik established the first secular public school in 1907. Later, Emperor Haileselassie, who had recognized himself as the father of modern education in Ethiopia (Balsvik 1985; Wagaw 1990), expanded access to primary and secondary education. This created a demand for higher education to which the government responded by establishing the first higher education institution in the country in 1950, the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA). In 1961, the UCAA was renamed Haileselassie I University (HSIU) and the Emperor became its first chancellor. At this time there was very little access to higher education but those who got the opportunity had actively participated in various national affairs.

Students' active participation in their countries' political, social and cultural issues can be considered a global phenomenon that emerged in the mid-1880s (Zewde 2014). University students comprise one youth group that has been striving to bring political and social changes across post-colonial Africa, described in a study titled, *Student protest – university and state in Africa 1960–1995*, (Balsvik 1998). Demonstrating their contempt for the capitalist system as a strategy for development, and their leaders' abuse of power, "[t]he students took upon themselves to be the conscience of the nation and the spokesmen of the downtrodden". In their self-image they were "more responsible for the future development of their countries than other groups" (Balsvik 1998, 316). This indicates university students' firm aspirations to be present in the process of social and political change.

The Ethiopian student movement became one of the strongest of its kind in Africa, and one of the vanguards of the international wave of student activism

in the 1960s (Balsvik 2012; Zewde 2014). Although the undemocratic rule of the Haileselassie government system was the main reason for its conception, there were also other contributory factors: Ethiopian student activism abroad, the global student movements, the anti-imperialist and pro-socialist movements in some Western countries, the presence of students from different African countries on Ethiopian government scholarships and the inculcation of Western ideologies through the curricula. The students that came to study in Ethiopia were politically mature and increased the political consciousness of Ethiopian university students (Zewde 2014), helping them in their attempts to express their opinions and unite the student population. Moreover, in Ethiopia all public higher education institutions are residential colleges (i.e., food, accommodation and health services are provided by universities) and this has given students an opportunity to create unity and solidarity through frequent intergroup contact.

This chapter examines student activism in Ethiopia, a country which, together with other Sub-Saharan African countries, has the lowest number of students in higher education in the world. While in 1995, 58 per cent of the relevant age group was enrolled in tertiary education in high income countries, this was true of only three per cent on average in Sub-Saharan Africa. Women comprised only 15 to 20 per cent of the student population in higher education in Ethiopia in the 1990s. The low number of women and their low standing in the Ethiopian culture explain why female students were far from numerous among the activists. But from the early 1970s a few individual female students were willing to sacrifice, even their lives, for the cause for which the student movement fought (Balsvik 2007, 4–10).

Although there are studies which discuss the Ethiopian student movement in the 1960s and 1970s (see Balsvik 1985, 2007, 2009; Darch 1976; Kebede 2008; Tiruneh 1993; Zewde 2014), there is less scholarly discussion regarding university students' participation in, and contribution to, political and social change over time. Therefore, the following sections illuminate university students' participation in this field and advance the discussion of problems they faced during different regimes in Ethiopia. Moreover, comparative analysis across the regimes contributes to a better understanding of the issue of student activism in the country from social and political perspectives. It will be argued that students strongly influenced the political developments and social changes in Ethiopia until their unity was undermined by ethnic divisions. To better understand these issues, the next three sections of the chapter focus on students' participation in and contribution to political and social change during the preceding two and the current regimes – (1) the Haileselassie (Imperial) regime; (2) the Derg (Military) regime; and (3) the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE).

The Haileselassie (Imperial) Regime (1930–1974)

The Haileselassie regime aimed at building a strong centralized state (Mengisteab 1997; Tronvoll 2000), designating homogenization as the nation-building strategy providing the best guarantee for state integration (Van der Beken 2008). In pursuance of this policy, the regime wanted to create a national culture, language and religion for all Ethiopians (Alemu and Tekleselassie 2006). As a result, Amharic was the only language used for media, courts, education and publication purposes. It was not legal to teach, publish or broadcast in languages other than Amharic and English (Boothe and Walker 1997; Markakis 1989). In practice, Amharic served as "the language of administration as well as the language and culture of integration" (Tronvoll 2000, 13).

Although Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Roman Catholicism and other religions co-existed, due to the policy of national integration the 1955 constitution declared Orthodox Christianity to be the religion of the empire, and the Emperor always professed the Ethiopian Orthodox Faith. Due to the Orthodox Church supremacy, "the concepts of the Ethiopian state and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had been almost synonymous – both locally and internationally" (Friedman 1989, 249). Despite the assimilationist political system and state practice that denied equality to members of the diverse Ethiopian society, most university students and student activists preferred and advocated an Ethiopian nationalism which transcended all social identities and loyalties (Balsvik 2007; Tadesse 1993).

As any government does, the Haileselassie regime promised to bring development to the country. However, after three decades in power, it was not able to meet the basic needs and expectations of the majority of society. The regime's failure to address several social and political problems and the denial of equality created widespread dissatisfaction. However, it was difficult to challenge the futile political and administrative system as there was a lack of political consciousness among Ethiopians, most of whom were illiterate and working for landlords under a feudal system. There were also no civil society organizations or political parties to stand up for the rights of the larger society and voice its grievances. It was in such contexts that university students emerged as "the most outspoken and visibly the only consolidated opposition group" (Balsvik 1985, xiii) to challenge the system. The students considered themselves the "spokesmen and advocates of the 'suffering masses'" (Balsvik 2009, 263). Although students were discontented with the political and social system of the monarchy prior to 1960, they made it public in the early 1960s when they demonstrated in favour of the 1960 failed coup d'état while the emperor was on an official visit to Brazil. This was the beginning of many more anti-government student demonstrations.

In the early 1960s, the students used the campus poetry competition as a strategy to criticize the government system. They read poems on public stages which were attended by high officials of the government including the emperor. "Students can write on any topic under the sun, except on politics and religion" (University College Calls quoted in Zewde 2014, 73). However, the poetry competition was crippled because of strong censorship and punishment by the government. Later, the establishment of the University Students' Union of Addis Ababa and ideological support from Ethiopian students' unions in the USA and Europe provided new impetus to the student movement in the mid-1960s. This helped them to raise important national issues in an organized way.

In 1964 the Ethiopian University Service was developed as a degree requirement in which students were expected to work one year (at the end of the third year) in the provinces, mostly as teachers (Balsvik 1985, 2012). This system also contributed to disseminating campus politics to a much wider population outside the university, raising consciousness among secondary school students and generating loyalty towards the informal leadership of university students (Balsvik 2012). One of the major social and political issues that students raised in the mid-1960s was the abolishment of the feudal land tenure system which was considered a primary factor affecting agricultural productivity. Students advocated the need to implement land reform and marched on the streets of the capital chanting the famous slogan "*Meret Learashu*" which literally means "Land to the Tiller". They also demanded the government address different issues including corruption and rising prices (Turner 1991).

In spite of students' strong demands and continuous class boycotts and demonstrations, the imperial government did not significantly address social inequalities, the traditional political system, exploitation of peasants and corruption. The regime's reluctance to integrate the newly educated generation into the system incited rage and revolution among the students (Balsvik 2012). Discontented with the political, social and economic policies of the imperial regime, at the end of 1960s, in addition to the land reform, students demanded a new political system and ideology that served social equity, advocating Marxism-Leninism as right and appropriate (Balsvik 1985; Tiruneh 1993). Some student activists also raised and discussed other important national issues regarding democratic rights which brought the matters of ethnicity and self-determination into the debate among the civilian left (Vaughan 2003). This eventually "gave secession a cloak of respectability that had not been there previously" (Tiruneh 1993, 30). The issue of ethnicity and secession was first publicly raised by Wallelign Mekonnen (1969) in his article titled, "On the

questions of nationalities in Ethiopia", which was published in the students' union magazine called *Struggle*. As indicated in the excerpt below, Mekonnen, who was a student activist killed in 1972 when he and six other students attempted to hijack an Ethiopian airline, argued that Ethiopia is not one nation; rather it is made up of different nations and nationalities.

> What are the Ethiopian people composed of? I stress on the word peoples because sociologically speaking at this stage Ethiopia is not really one nation. It is made up of a dozen nationalities with their own languages, ways of dressing, history, social organization and territorial entity. And what else is a nation? It is not made of a people with a particular tongue, particular ways of dressing, particular history, [and] particular social and economic organization? Then may I conclude that in Ethiopia there is the Oromo Nation, the Tigrai Nation, the Amhara Nation, the Gurage Nation, the Sidama Nation, the Wellamo [Wolayta] Nation, the Adere [Harari] Nation, and however much you may not like it the Somali Nation. This is the true picture of Ethiopia. There is of course the fake Ethiopian Nationalism advanced by the ruling class and unwillingly accepted and even propagated by innocent fellow travellers.
>
> MEKONNEN 1969, 4

He also stated the need for a "genuine national-state" which is:

> a state in which all nationalities participate equally in state affairs, it is a state where every nationality is given equal opportunity to preserve and develop its language, its music and its history. ... It is a state where no nation dominates another nation be it economically or culturally.
>
> MEKONNEN 1969, 5

In order to achieve establishing a "genuine democratic and egalitarian state", he proposed different strategies including secessionist movement, which is the most controversial of all up until now.

> There is nothing wrong with secessionism as such. For that matter secession is much better than nationally oppressive government. ...It is clear that we can achieve this goal [establishing a genuine democratic and egalitarian state] only through violence, through revolutionary armed struggle. But we must always guard ourselves against the pseudo-nationalist propaganda of the regime. The revolution can start anywhere. It can even

be secessionist to begin with, as long as led by the progressive forces-
the peasants and the workers, and has the final aim the liberation of the
Ethiopian.

MEKONNEN 1969, 7

The main objective of bringing up this issue here is to show how deeply stu-
dents were engaged in the national socio-political issues of the country. It is
not the aim of this paper to argue for or against the political implications of
secession. However, it is necessary to mention that there are scholars who
strongly assert that issues related to self-determination were not in the student
movement agenda. The "discussion of the self-determination of nationalities
within the student movement represented nothing more than the success of
a subtle campaign of manipulation by Eritrean activists, designed to distort
and subvert the radical movement in the furtherance of their own secessionist
objectives" (Vaughan 2003, 130). Zewde (2014) also noted that the Eritrean in-
surgency played a significant role in the "origin and evolution" of the national
question in the Ethiopian student movement.

    At the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s, the student movement became
the strongest force to challenge the imperial regime. Class boycotts and closure
of the university were almost common phenomena (Darch 1976). The govern-
ment did not like students' perseverance in fighting against what they believed
was moving in the wrong direction. Repression and harsh punishment, rather
than dialogue, became the usual government response to student expression
(Balsvik 1985, 2012). In actions described as "upholding law and order", the
government started taking severe measures including the killing of student
representatives and activists by security forces. This did not stop the students;
it rather united them and provided the impetus to hold anti-government
demonstrations and demand change in the government. At the beginning of
1974, things started to get out of control. Different groups, including the trade
unions, teachers, civil servants and taxi drivers, joined students in protesting
against the imperial government.

    The Military Coordinating Committee, which is commonly referred to as
the Derg, was also formed and came to the forefront of the political stage for
the first time. By that time, the imperial regime was a toothless lion which was
unable to stop the wave of revolution first ignited by students some fifteen
years earlier and followed by action by other civil and military groups in the
early 1970s. Finally, after 45 years in power, in September 1974, the Haileselassie
regime was overthrown by the Derg. Although there were nationalist, ethno-
nationalist and peasant opposition groups across the country that challenged

the monarchy, the activities and contribution of students stand out most in overturning the ineffectual political and administrative system.

The Derg (Military) Regime (1974–1991)

Following the overthrow of the imperial regime, HSIU was renamed Addis Ababa University (AAU) in 1974. Although there were colleges in different parts of the country, for a population of about 41 million Ethiopia had only one university until 1985, the year Alemaya College of Agriculture became Alemaya (now called Haramaya) University. This is excluding Asmara University, which is now in Eritrea. When the Derg (also known as the Mengistu regime) assumed power in 1974, it is believed to have had no well-thought-out political plan, except a policy statement called *Ethiopia Tikdem* (Ethiopia First), which is "variously referred to by the Derg as its motto, slogan, philosophy, principle, ideology etc." (Tiruneh 1993, 66). Hence, it adopted Marxism-Leninism, which was the popular political ideology in the student movement at the time. The adoption of socialism as the principal political ideology had two main purposes – "to capture the imagination of the revolutionary youth ... and to compete with the civilian left for revolutionary leadership" (Gudina 2007, 7). This clearly shows the student contribution in bringing about political change which was believed to be important for the country's democratic development at the time.

Students were in favour of the revolution, but they opposed military rule which was against what they had been struggling for (Abate 1991). In pursuance of this stance, they adopted the resolution of the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions which demanded the replacement of the military regime with a democratic people's government (Tiruneh 1993). They also reminded the military regime about "Land to the Tiller", the most popular slogan among students in their struggle against the imperial regime. On the other hand, in addition to constitutional declarations, to obtain legitimacy with the civilian left as well as the larger society the Derg had also taken on board different social development issues raised by the civilian left, notably in the student movement. As part of this strategy, the military regime came up with a development plan which is believed to have been instigated by administrators who had their origin in the student movement (Balsvik 2009). In order to bring about the planned development and changes in the country, the Derg created the *Ediget Behibret Zemecha* (Development through Cooperation Campaign) which is commonly referred to as *Zemecha* (campaign), which required students to take part as the main implementers. Students welcomed the development plan, but

they initially refused to participate as their demands regarding the political administration and land issues had not yet been met.

When their initial refusal to participate failed to bring about change in the political administration, the students joined the campaign in January 1975, "half consenting enthusiastically and half feeling that they were being forced, both by the military and by circumstances" (Balsvik 2009, 262). However, it was believed that the students' determination was one of the factors that pressed the military government to issue the land proclamation that nationalized all rural land in March 1975, thought to be "one of the most radical land reform proclamations that any regime has ever issued" (Zewde quoted in Balsvik 2009, 261). This is another significant contribution by students to political and social change in the country. After the land reform proclamation, which mostly addressed the main historical criticism raised by ethnic groups (Gudina 2007), as part of building socialism in Ethiopia, and allegedly as a response to the demands of ethnic nationalism, the Derg came out with the declaration of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) in 1976. The NDR declared that "the right to self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and fully respected. No nationality will dominate another one since the history, culture, language and religion of each nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism" (Provisional Military Administrative Council 1976). The declarations of land reform and ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural equality in the 1987 constitution seemed to be positive responses to the many inequalities perpetuated under the previous regimes. However, their implementation was far below social expectations.

At the beginning of 1975, the Derg announced the closure of AAU for an indefinite time because the participation of university students and teachers was required to implement the government's development plan. However, among some groups this was considered a systematic strategy to prevent students' unity of action which could have caused considerable pressure during the transition period (Balsvik 1994; Darch 1976; Haile-Selassie 1997; Turner 1991). According to Balsvik (2009, 261), "Approximately six thousand university students and teachers, and nearly fifty thousand secondary school students from all over the country, were sent to 437 places in the countryside." The campaign was generally intended to "teach and politicize the peasants" (Ahmed 2006, 298) and "to 'enlighten' the rural masses about development" (Tiruneh 1993, 102). In the course of the campaign, university students taught peasants about civil rights, land ownership and hygiene, created awareness of land redistribution, and participated in the formation of peasant associations, bringing literacy and building schools, clinics and latrines.

AAU was reopened in the 1976/1977 academic year. Students who returned from the campaign continued their opposition to the military regime, claiming

that some of their fundamental questions had not been answered. Above all, they demanded the formation of a people's government. At the time, they were encouraged and influenced by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), which was established during Haileselassie's regime by veterans of the student movement abroad, and became one of the main opposition political groups. The Derg understood the potential impacts of the continuing students' radical movement and it started taking measures such as banning the students' union and its publication, which was the main medium they used to express their opinions and standpoints. When student opposition and that from opposition political groups intensified, the military regime took severer measures still, including the *Key Shibr* (Red Terror) in which thousands of real and imagined opponents of the regime were killed, with youth comprising the main victims. Terrified by the situation, numerous students fled the country between 1976 and 1978, joining ethnicity-based armed liberation movements, and most of the others who continued their studies refrained from actively involving themselves in the country's politics and nation-building process. It can be argued that, "[f]or the student movement, the 1980s were a time of both political hibernation and modest recovery from the repression of the second half of the 1970s ... students had become by this time politically impotent" (Ahmed 2006, 299).

The other contribution by students to social development during the Derg regime was their active participation in the resettlement and villagization programs which were part of the government's ten year development plan. Villagization and resettlement are two different but related programs (Steingraber 1987). The official objective of the villagization program was to promote rational land use, conserve resources and provide better social services (e.g. education and health), and the main objective of the resettlement program was to solve problems related to drought and famine (Abate 1991; Wubneh 1991). In the resettlement and villagization programs, rural peoples who were scattered across the country were clustered into villages, and people from the draught stricken north were moved to the south and southwest part of the country. The government planned to relocate 30 million people (two-thirds of the population) over about a decade; it is believed that by the end of 1989, about 13 million rural habitants had been relocated in thousands of new villages established in 12 provinces (Wubneh 1991). These programs were considered "one of the largest mass movements of people anywhere in the world" (Steingraber 1987). In 1985, all higher education institutions were closed for two months as students and teachers went to assist in the programs. After this time, students' participation in political and social affairs stagnated until the military regime was overthrown in 1991 by the coalition of the ethno-nationalist movement mainly led by the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF).

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1991-present)

In the years 1999–2005, eight new universities were established by merging and/or upgrading existing colleges and institutes. Although this resulted in an increase in student intake capacity, it was not able to respond to the rapidly expanding educational needs of the society or enhance economic growth, democracy and good governance in the country (Yizengaw 2003). Thus, in 2003, the government began the greatest expansion in the history of Ethiopian higher education. As a result, 21 universities were opened in less than a decade. In order to maintain continuity, however, this study mainly focuses on AAU students who, compared with students in other public universities, have most often tended to raise political and national issues, even since the current government came to power.

In 1995, following the transitional period (1991–1994), the FDRE was formed by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) which comprises four major ethnic political parties: the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM), the TPLF and many other allied ethnicity-based political parties. The ruling political organization of the FDRE is dominated and led by the TPLF (Mehretu 2012; Parker and Woldegiorgis 2003; Van der Beken 2012; Woldeyohannes 2012).

By understanding Ethiopia as an ethnically diverse country with a political history of ethno-linguistic domination (Zewde 2004), the EPRDF-led government introduced an ethnicity-based federal system that, it was believed, would accommodate diversity and give dignity to all Ethiopians, irrespective of ethnic origin. Consequently, ethnicity became the ideological basis of the EPRDF government's political organization and administration (Abbink 1997; Parker and Woldegiorgis 2003; Smis 2008). As a result of the federal system, Ethiopia has become a federal polity with nine ethnicity-based regional states and two chartered cities that constitute the federation. According to the state policy, unity and Ethiopian national identity is based on the recognition of, and respect for, diversity (Van der Beken 2008; 2012), and ethnic federalism is "understood primarily as a mechanism of conflict resolution" (Vaughan 2003, 36).

University students' self-motivated participation in national political affairs continued soon after the EPRDF and other political organizations, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), agreed to establish a transitional government which would engineer a new constitution and election. OLF was one of the rebellious groups that helped to overthrow the Derg regime and establish the Transitional Government of Ethiopia. In 1992, OLF withdrew from the government, and in 2011 the government of Ethiopia declared OLF one of the five

terrorist entities (Adamu 2014). Contrary to what some student activists had proposed and advocated at the end of 1960s, in 1993, AAU students demonstrated in protest against a planned referendum on Eritrean independence. The immediate response from the transitional government to this opposition was to order security forces to open fire on students demonstrating on the streets of Addis Ababa. Some students were also arrested and the university was temporarily closed (Ahmed 2006). Eventually, in April 1993 Eritrea became an independent country.

The 1995 constitution affirms that state and religion are separate, and that there is no state religion. The constitution also declared that everyone has the right to freedom of religion, and that believers can establish institutions of religious education and administration in order to propagate and organize their religion. Unlike in many countries in Western Europe and North America, where religion may be one of the basic dimensions of a political party (Reynal-Querol 2002), in Ethiopia, the government prohibits the formation of political parties based on religion (United States Department of State 2011). With regard to language, all are declared equal, although Amharic has retained the status of the working language of the federal government. Regional states have been given the right to choose their own working language which is applicable within their own territories. Yet, although the constitution declared that all ethnic groups are equal, several studies indicate that politics in Ethiopia has been dominated by the EPRDF, which in turn is led and dominated by a numerical minority, the Tigre ethnic group (Habtu 2004; 2005; Tronvoll 2000; Záhořík 2011). It seems that political domination by one ethnic group has continued and, therefore, "as the two previous regimes were largely identified with the Amhara, so the present government is widely perceived to be Tigrean" (Mengisteab 2001, 24).

The constitution also gives every ethnic group the unconditional right to self-determination up to the point of secession. It is assumed that this right will result in unity in diversity, and the creation of an Ethiopian national identity based on respect for ethnic diversity (Van der Beken 2008). Issues related to ethnicity and self-determination, which is constitutionalized by the EPRDF-led government, were first raised by student activists at the end of 1960s (Gudina 2003), notably in Mekonnen's (1969) article. Emphasizing this, Vaughan (2003, 129) states, "The EPRDF has repeatedly accentuated its debt to those elements of the Ethiopian student movement, who first elucidated notions of self-determination of nationalities within the Ethiopian empire state, and laid the ideological basis for political mobilization on the basis of 'nationality'". She adds that "over thirty years later, [Mekonnen's article] reads like a blueprint of the ideological position advocated by the TPLF/EPRDF"

(Vaughan 2003, 136). Regardless of its implications, this shows the influence of students' thoughts and views on their country's politics.

As it will be discussed later, despite the governments' various strategies to disunite students, they continued to demand their rights and, at times, respect for the peoples' voice. For example, in 2001, AAU students demonstrated for greater academic freedom, freedom of association and expression, and the removal of armed police stationed on the campus. At the time, the AAU students' union and the publication of its newspaper were banned (Human Rights Watch [HRW] 2003; Rowan 2001). In 2001 students boycotted classes and demonstrated inside their campus, demanding a response from the university about the reestablishment of their union and newspaper which they often used to criticize academic and administrative issues on campus as well as the political and administrative system of the government. Government security forces entered the campus and beat students holding the peaceful demonstration. Seeking solutions and a reduction in tension, students held a meeting with the minister of education who denounced the police intrusion as illegal and unauthorized. However, no substantial agreement was reached between students and the government so students boycotted classes and went on strike again (Ahmed 2006), joined by students in other universities and secondary schools in a show of solidarity. According to HRW (2003, 18), "government forces responded to the protests with extreme brutality, killing more than thirty people, wounding some four hundred, and arresting thousands. ... about 250 students fled to Kenya; others went to Djibouti or Sudan." AAU students who withdrew from their studies as a result of the closure of the university were readmitted one year after the campus strike (Ahmed 2006).

Students have not been much involved in the political process and democratic development of the country since this brutal measure was taken by the present regime, but at times they have been very active in echoing societal activities and problems. For instance, in the 2005 general election, opposition parties rejected provisional results because of alleged voting irregularities, among other reasons. Following the controversial result, there was unrest in most parts of the country. Three weeks after the election date, defying the government's ban against demonstrations which was effective during the election period, AAU students mounted the first public protest over the general election that resonated with opposition parties' complaints. Immediately, students in many other universities and secondary schools across the country protested the election result in solidarity with majority of Ethiopians. However, this failed to result in any change, and once again thousands of students were beaten and arrested by security forces.

In May 2016 the government revealed its integrated master plan for the capital, Addis Ababa, to expand into Oromia Regional State. The Oromo people claimed that this did not have their consent, and that such a plan would lead to the eviction of Oromo farmers from their land. Although people from other ethnic groups felt the same way, it was only Oromo students from universities in Oromia Regional State who protested against it. This clearly demonstrates the insecurity of students in universities that are geographically located away from the concern at hand and the lack of solidarity among students from different ethnic backgrounds even when they share a concern. Perhaps this also shows the erosion of long existing elements of social cohesion underlying Ethiopian society. Following the demonstration by the university students many people in towns in Oromia protested against the government. Before it decided to halt its integrated master plan, the government crushed the demonstration by arresting and killing numerous people including students. For example, several students in Madawalabu University were killed and about twenty AAU students were arrested (Amnesty International 2016; British Broadcasting Corporation 2016; Counter Punch 2016; HRW 2016).

Nowadays, there are a number of important national issues that students need to discuss and contribute to addressing in different ways. These include but are not limited to academic freedom, the quality of education, the political system, human rights, land grabbing, forced resettlement, ethnic conflict, religious tension and the steep rise in prices which are increasing more than ever before. Although there are some political and social situations which seem to be worse than during the preceding regimes, no significant contributions are being made by students to alleviate these problems. This is not so much because students do not want to participate in issues of national importance; it is rather because the government has designed different strategies to make sure that potential influence by students is prevented. Some of the ruling party elites, including Meles Zenawi, the late prime minister and chairperson of the EPRDF, were members of the strong and united student movement which protested against the imperial regime and later interrupted their studies to fight against the military regime. Clearly the current government is well aware of the potential influence of students in Ethiopian political and social change and wishes to avoid this when it comes to its own administration. That is why, from the very beginning of its administration, it has worked to create more dividing than uniting factors, and has taken such serious preventive measures. This has alienated students from participating and contributing to political and social change.

One of the main elements that have distanced students from being active in national affairs seems to be the ethnicity-based political and administrative

system. Since its introduction, it is becoming more and more evident that many people's first allegiance is to their ethnic group, and "their country is a poor second" (Milkias 2011, 58); university students are no exception. This contradicts the ethnic and national sentiments of university students in Ethiopia in the late 1960s. At that time students had a strong national identity and less ethnic and regional affiliation (Balsvik 2007; Young 1997). Studies and reports also indicate that the ethnicity-based federal system increased differences among ethnic groups in Ethiopia (International Crisis Group 2009), and encouraged division along ethnic lines (Engedayehu 1993) at the cost of national unity. This has been facilitated through, and emphasized by, the mass media and the ruling and opposition political parties' political indoctrination which, combined, have eroded students' unity and national sentiment.

The government has also weakened students' participation in national affairs by various strategies, one of which is making sure that a strong students' union like that of the preceding regimes does not emerge. In the 1960s, Ethiopia had one of the strongest students' unions on the continent but now Ethiopian students are not represented at all in the All Africa Students' Union, which aims "to be fully involved in the peoples' struggles against all forms of domination, exploitation, discrimination, for peace, democracy and socio-economic development" (All-Africa Students Union). This is because there is no strong national student union in the country. Previous studies indicate that to continue in power, "it was considered important for the government to prevent the formation of united independent student unions across ethnic boundaries" (Balsvik 2007, 181). Moreover, amplifying historical grievances as part of the divide and rule strategy has created hatred and animosity among students from different ethnic backgrounds. Students who talk about national unity have been heavily criticized and considered anti-federalists and advocates of a unitary state. Another strategy is trivializing and labelling students' different national concerns as ethnic issues and as limited to a few students from certain ethnic groups. For example, in 1996, in the Amhara region, the government redistributed the land that it feels was unjustly acquired by people who had been associated with the previous military or imperial regime (UNDP 1997). In March 1997 AAU students demonstrated against the move (Ahmed 2006; Balsvik 2007), voicing their concern and opposition to the land redistribution system because they believed that the decision was unfair and politically motivated. But their concern was labelled as an issue only involving a few Amhara students who had benefited from the unjustly acquired land.

Yet another strategy used by the government to alienate students from participating in national affairs is to denounce questions raised by students as not coming from students, claiming that the students have been used as an

instrument by other forces such as opposition parties, separatists and terrorist factions, even to the extent of associating students' questions regarding food quality with politics. Beside these strategies, expulsion from university, intimidation, arrest and killings are also factors that have distanced students from participating in important political and social issues. Because of the above mentioned causes, among other reasons, what seems to be more common among university students nowadays is division along ethnic lines, and ethnic conflict, than discussions and debates on important national political and social issues.

Epilogue

Students often want to be heard and to participate in their country's national affairs even when the government system ignores their contribution. In Ethiopia, university students' participation in important national issues started soon after the establishment of the first higher education institution in the country. The students during the Haileselassie regime created and enhanced political consciousness, and struggled for social equality and fair administration. It can be argued that they were the principal group of activists strongly challenging the imperial government's administrative and political system. The social policies and political ideologies which students proposed during the imperial regime were able to influence and give direction to some of the social policies and political ideologies of the following governments. The student movement was a significant force in the fall of the Haileselassie regime and in directing policies of the military regime.

During the military regime, students did not come up with new political and social ideologies and viewpoints as they had during the preceding regime, rather focusing on the realization of their previous political and social demands. Students' contributions to political and social change during the Derg regime came mainly through providing ideas and insights about political ideologies, and influencing the realization of social policies such as the land proclamation. They also contributed to social development by participating in a government-planned, multipurpose development campaign. Moreover, the 1960s and 1970s student movement was a motivating factor and a symbol of solidarity and determination for several political and social groups in the country. However, their contribution gradually decreased because of a growing lack of freedom of expression and association, and the severe measures taken by the military regime.

As during the Derg regime, students have not come up with new ideas and opinions that would have positive impacts on the social and political

development process of the EPRDF-led government. This may be somehow related to the presence of different civil society and political organizations that primarily work on such issues. Moreover, during the imperial and Derg regimes students had prioritized the struggle for a better life for the larger society over their own immediate and temporary needs such as better food and living conditions. Contrary to this, students in the EPRDF-led government system have been forced to focus on narrow issues that do not have national importance, and their views on some national issues have been silenced by the government's use of a range of different strategies. Although there are several reasons why students' participation in important national issues has been crippled, the ethnicity-based administrative and political system stands out as the parent of them all.

It can generally be argued that ever since higher education institutions opened in Ethiopia, university students have been the root cause of political and social change in the country, though, comparatively speaking, more during the imperial regime than the two that have followed. Their contribution has gradually decreased and, arguably, a time seems to have come when university students are no longer contributing to the political and social change and development of their country. Since the early 1960s students have paid a heavy price for contributing to the nation-building process. Although they used peaceful strategies such as discussions and debates among themselves, and class boycotts, demonstrations, and publication and distribution of anti-government texts, they were victimized in many ways (expulsion from their place of study, arrest, imprisonment, torture, and death). This has been the case during all the regimes, but brutality was highest, almost unprecedented in the world, during the military regime.

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Child Participation in Ghana: Responsibilities and Rights

Þóra Björnsdóttir and Jónína Einarsdóttir

Introduction

Scholars have long debated the definition of a child and when an individual becomes a youth or an adult. The debate revolves around so-called Western ideas that the life span is divided into clear cut age-based categories such as childhood, adolescence, adulthood and senescent (Eriksen 2001). This life cycle thinking assumes that children, under parental guidance, should enjoy their lives: happy, beloved, well taken care of and protected from hazards (Korbin 2003; Stephens 1995; Such, Walker and Walker 2005). The assumption that childhood is universal and a process every child goes through to prepare for adulthood has been challenged, and scholars argue that it is not a valid claim even in the assumed West (Bucholtz 2002; Liebel 2004). Instead, childhood should be regarded as a social construction or, as James and Prout famously argue, "childhood should be regarded as a part of society and culture rather than a precursor to it; and ... children should be seen as already social actors not beings in the process of becoming such" (James and Prout 2015, xi). Culturally, the boundary between a child, youth and adult can be blurred, which should be taken into account when discussing child-related issues.

The International Year of the Child in 1979 challenged Western ideology of children and childhood. Images of children's harsh living conditions all around the world resulted in increased awareness of child abuse and neglect, and demands for special agreements framing child rights issues (Christiansen and Prout 2005; Korbin 2003). Negotiations resulted in the creation of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC, which has been adopted by 170 countries, acknowledges children as individuals with their own rights. Some scholars believe the UNCRC has had a great impact on the international agenda and increased awareness of children's rights, their life conditions and future potentials (Doek 2009; Lansdown 2010; UNCRC 1989). Others criticize the UNCRC for universalizing child rights and formulating them in the terms of the minority world while ignoring the conditions, culture

and customs of children in the majority world (Tisdall and Punch 2012; Korbin 2003; Qvortrup 1994; Stephens 1995; Such, Walker and Walker 2005). Further, there is disagreement on the three key concepts of the UNCRC, that is, protection, provision and participation, and which of these should be given priority (Olesen 2004). Considering that children are still dying from preventable diseases, some scholars argue the focus should be on protection and provision, underlining that children's survival comes first as otherwise they will not live to enjoy any rights (Horton 2004). Meanwhile, others claim more success can be attained if children are aware of their rights and are able to fight for them (Gordon, Nandy, Pantazis, Pemberton and Townsend 2007).

Some scholars, children's advocates and aid workers believe that with the increased participation of the intended beneficiaries, the implementation of projects, legislations and agreements will be more successful (Mikkelsen 2005; UNHCHR 2006). The participation concept has, however, created political tension within the development aid discourse; some claim participation to be critical for successful implementation while others are concerned with what they call the 'tyranny' of participation (Baaz 2005; Brown 2004; Cooke and Kothari 2002). Despite critique of the UNCRC and the concept of participation, in the wake of the UNCRC children are reported to have become more aware of their rights and are increasingly fighting for them (Doek 2009; Coly and Torenzio 2007; Ehlers and Frank 2008; Honwana 2013). Likewise, participation has increasingly become popular among international and local development agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Hart 2013; Lansdown 2010).

This chapter examines the participation of children and youth in Ghana in projects executed around the country, mostly by local authorities, NGOs and governmental organizations. Since independence in 1957, Ghana has been considered a forerunner among African states in good governance and democracy. In past years, the government has focused on human and child rights and declared its intention to improve future potentials of young people in the country. Many agreements that, to some extent, cover child and youth participation and acknowledge children as individuals with agency and the capacity to express their views have been ratified and legislated. Participatory projects can be found all around in the country and most of these are sponsored or have been established by government institutions, international and local development agencies and NGOs (Björnsdóttir 2011).

The chapter rests on fieldwork in Ghana carried out from September to December 2010 (Björnsdóttir 2011). Data collection was based on qualitative methodologies, including participant observation, focus group discussions, visual methods and interviews. The participants in the study were girls and boys aged 6–18 years from urban and rural areas and youth aged 19–28 who

were and had been involved in participatory projects since an early age. Young people aged 13–19 comprised the majority of the participants in the research. Additional participants were adults working within governmental institutions, organizations and NGOs who aimed to enhance children's right to participate in Ghana. The research focuses mainly on three types of participatory projects where children and youth are given the opportunity to learn about their rights and share their knowledge with other members of society. The first are the child rights clubs that can be found in most schools in the country. The second type is represented by the radio program Curious Minds that is hosted by children and youth. The third type includes three bigger events: The Constitutional Review Commission, Global Handwashing Day and Ghana Water Forum, all of which aim to create platforms for children and young people to express themselves at the national level.

This chapter intentionally blurs the boundary between a child and a youth, as we wish to explore how young people perceive and utilize the idea of child participation. We begin with a presentation of the benefits of participation and thereafter treat the barriers to its realization. Then we outline an approach that aims to overcome the barriers for the benefit of all parties. Finally, we focus on adult involvement in participatory projects and its implications.

Benefits of Participation

According to scholars, participation can benefit both children and the society in various ways. Participation is believed to increase democratic understanding and rights among young people and support their future potential (Ansell 2005; Ehlers and Frank 2008). Furthermore, research indicates that participation gives children and youth an increased sense of competence and confidence, and adults gain an understanding of children's lives and become more sensitive and positive towards their opinions (Ansell 2005; O'Kane 2003). The participants in our study agreed with these advantages of participation, further arguing that it was beneficial for children themselves as well as their society. Most claimed to enjoy participation and said that they were engaged in such projects mostly for own pleasure. Children and youth in the child rights clubs and Curious Minds agreed that by being involved they had made new friends and been able to socialize with others, which brought happiness into their lives. They were also able to discuss and share their problems with others without being criticized. Those who participated in the bigger events were happy with meeting new people but they also enjoyed the experience of travelling and being allowed to be part of an event on a national level. Furthermore,

they also argued that their involvement in participatory projects benefited themselves and other members of the society both from a short and long term perspective.

Many children and youth, in all programs, believed participation could increase their future opportunities. By being involved in participatory programs, as explained by a fifteen year old girl in a children's rights club, she would get more confidence and learn to speak in front of many people, both young and old. Furthermore, worrying about how others would react to her opinions would no longer prevent her sharing them. According to a sixteen-year-old girl, increased confidence would not only help in improving a child's current life but also contribute to better opportunities in the future, for example in getting a good job. Other children, and indeed adults as well, agreed that participation enhanced children's future opportunities. Furthermore, as mentioned by a thirteen-year-old boy, participation could help others. A child who was confident would be more likely to share his or her knowledge by educating others about child rights and raising awareness about child-related issues. Accordingly, he argued, other children would become more aware of their rights as, most likely, would other community members as well.

Both girls and boys agreed that they would learn critical thinking through participation and therefore their views would sound more sensible to adults, making it easier for adults to understand and approve their opinions. Because of the skills they had developed through participatory projects, the children also felt more accepted and acknowledged, further increasing their chances of being involved in decision-making, sharing their opinions and having a voice in society. One fourteen-year-old girl argued that children were clever and fully capable of discussing their own rights and views, and most often they did so better than adults. Therefore, by making all members of society aware of the importance of children's participatory rights, their future opportunities would not only increase but they would also develop important skills and abilities which would benefit them and their society as whole. The children themselves could educate and inform other members of society about their rights, thereby affecting future generations and making the community better prepared and educated to deal with child-related issues in a relevant way.

Many of the children who were involved in participatory projects also spent time volunteering and educating other children about their rights. They argued that through involvement in the projects they were more likely to understand and listen to each other. Further, as the number of children aware of child rights increased, the risk of someone depriving children of their rights would lessen. One girl who was active in an urban rights club believed that by being involved children could become 'voices for the voiceless' and consequently help those

unaware or deprived of their rights. Another aspect that could benefit the society was children's integrity. Both adults and children considered children to be honest, sincere, truthful and not easily corrupted by other members of society. This meant that children would bring new or different aspects into discussion, which would probably be missed out without their participation.

Barriers to Child and Youth Participation

The positive aspects of child participation identified by the children mostly coincide with the scholarly literature (Ansell 2005; Lansdown 2010; O'Kane 2003). However, the children identified three main barriers to their becoming true participants in their society. Firstly, they blamed the Ghanaian culture, more specifically its emphasis on age hierarchy and traditions of punishing children. Secondly, adults were regarded as being uneducated and in need of better knowledge of the positive aspects of child participation. Finally, the authorities were criticized for neglecting implementation and follow-up of adopted legislation, an issue also treated by scholars (Lansdown 2010; Malone and Hartung 2010). These barriers, identified by both children and adults, were assumed to impede child participation in Ghana, and prevent NGOs and governmental institutions from promoting truly child-friendly participation.

Cultural norms were believed to be a barrier to the participation of children in the country's organization, though none of the participants argued they should get rid of their culture. The barriers identified by the children and youth were related to adults' ideas and interventions. Respectful behaviour towards elders is a cultural tradition that should not be sabotaged, adults and children argued. Some of the children claimed that adults believed if children were given too much space in society, their own voices would be less valued and respected. Both girls and boys argued that adults disliked child rights in general and they had no intention or desire to accept child participation. Most of the children were confident that adults who feared or spoke out against child rights and participation did so because they were uninformed on the content of child participation. Adults did not understand the meaning or purpose of such participation for children and society. A young girl aged seventeen living in an urban area said, for instance, that her parents were not happy when she became active in participatory projects, thinking that she would become arrogant, stubborn and disrespectful towards elderly people. However, when they realized that her involvement did not change her for the worse, they began to approve of participation and admire her ability and finally they appreciated her engagement with participatory activities.

Both children and youth agreed that a hierarchy based on age was prevalent at all levels, including within local communities, the government and the school system. In some cases, children might be prevented from speaking, making decisions or even having their own opinions about certain issues. Children were categorized as ranking below other members in society, they said. They were afraid of speaking out and instead tended to hold back their views so they would not be punished for having expressed the wrong opinion. A fourteen-year-old boy from a rural area pointed out that young people tended to restrain their feelings and opinions to avoid corporal punishment. Children were afraid of sharing views with others, especially adults, because there was a chance of being beaten for having different ideas than those held by adults. Indeed, he believed caning had forced some children to quit school because of the fear they had for the teacher or other adult workers at the school.

Lastly, children and youth, along with adults supporting child rights, mentioned that the authorities had failed to implement some agreements and laws. Although the parliament had put considerable efforts into creating a platform from which children could speak out, and ratifying and forcing agreements into law, less focus had been directed towards following up the legislation. A young girl said governmental institutions in Ghana were successful in ratifying laws and agreements but following up on the implementation was not performed as needed. Further progress of children's participation in Ghana is therefore dependent on the authorities. Political changes at the national level are needed as well as the will to improve the participation of children and accept their involvement, views and opinions.

The Ghanaian children criticized the authorities for being ambiguous towards child rights and children's increased participation in their society. The authorities were seen as more interested in enhancing their own power and creating a positive image for outsiders than promoting child rights. Similarly, Ako, Ayidoho and Crafword (2014) found that the rights-based approach as a strategy to enhance the rights of economically disadvantaged people in Ghana was challenged by the national structure and traditional authorities. They suggest that sharing of power and cooperation between relevant partners could be a solution. The participants in our research also identified cooperation between adults and children as a way forward. In addition, they suggested ways of dealing with the cultural values that were identified as barriers to child participation.

Rights Come with Responsibilities

Lansdown (2010) argues that one of the main problems in implementing the participation of children in projects is the lack of an explicit definition of the

concept; scholars have mostly just described participation as 'involvement in daily activities' (see Alderson 2008). In order to narrow the definition of child participation a number of elements of what this means should be stressed: children must have a voice, take part in decision-making and be recognized as individuals (Hart 1992; Lansdown 2010, 1997; Treseder 1997), and not least, children and youth should be treated as "engaged actors rather than passive beneficiaries" (Ehlers and Frank 2008, 38). Thus, in participatory projects, the focus is partly on children's agency and initiatives, and partly on the training and skills of the child rights proponents. However, what constitutes an adequate role for adults in participatory projects for children, and to what extend children should be allowed to participate remains unclear.

Some scholars believe cooperation between adults and children to be crucial for implementation of participatory projects (Blanchet-Cohen and Bedeaux 2014; Ehlers and Frank 2008). Wyness (2013, 12) maintains that participatory projects are "about how children's voices can be heard and acknowledged through more interconnected relations between children and adults". One of the vital aspects of successful cooperation in participatory projects is that children are allowed to influence decision-making processes and that adults accept them as full members (O'Kane 2003). Likewise, Alderson (2008, 87) underlines that there must be appropriate balance and guidance "between protection and respect for the child autonomy; providing too little or too much adult support; helping children towards independence too early or too slowly; the child's and the parents and other people's rights, interests and welfare". In Ghana, cooperation between children and adults in participatory projects has been advocated and attempts made to implement such projects. For that purpose, the child right advocates launched the approach 'rights come with responsibilities'. The aim is to have the general public accept child participation and to counteract the identified barriers. The approach underlines that while having rights, children also have to understand their duties towards the family and the society. Thus, increased rights do not give children and youth permission to be disrespectful towards adults or any other community member. Accordingly, children are to be taught about their responsibilities and how these differ from rights. For example, children have the right to go to school but they also have the responsibility to attend school and to do their homework.

The children and youth who participated in the study usually accepted that rights come with responsibilities. However, some of them, especially the younger children living in rural areas, had difficulties in distinguishing between these terms. The adults, on the other hand, had no problem in recognizing the difference between rights and responsibilities and used the approach as a way to control child participation and the discourse of child rights in the country. As mentioned by an NGO male adult, although children had the right

to participate, the concept of child rights should not be separated from their responsibilities. Their participation also had to be controlled. Otherwise there was a risk of children getting 'spoiled' and without control adults would neither understand nor accept child engagement.

Child rights advocates, both the young and adults, agreed that education of the general public was needed to advance children's rights and increase their participation. At the same time the main pillars of Ghanaian society should be kept intact. Here, the hierarchy of age was seen as the trickiest issue. The argument was that children's participation need not interfere with the cultural values of Ghana; rather, participation would help both children and other community members to become aware of child rights and fight for them. Through cooperation both adults and children would gain what they aimed for, though the question arises as to how such cooperation affects the balance of power between children and adults negatively for the children. Furthermore, the approach 'rights with responsibilities' is likely to enhance adult involvement.

Adult Involvement

Adult intervention has been documented as a challenge to children's true participation due to the tendency of adults to underestimate children's capacity and agency (Lansdown 2010; Malone and Hartung 2010). Some adults assume that children are immature, irrational, irresponsible or incapable of making decisions concerning their own lives (Alderson 2008; Lansdown 2010; Driskell 2002; Malone and Hartung 2010; Treseder 1997) and consequently feel obligated to guide them in the 'right' direction. As a result of adults demanding certain behaviour, participation tends to become adult-centred instead of child-focused (Bordonaro and Payne 2012, 368). In addition, Treseder (1997) argues that people seem to like the idea of child participation as such, but not in practice. Adult's fear of children becoming too active, independent and confident has been identified as one of the main obstacles to child participation. The adults included in the study were either state employees or NGO representatives, and they all regarded themselves as genuine advocates of child rights. Nevertheless, some of them agreed with the above but also mentioned that children are unable to make decisions and share their views because of their immaturity, which consequently instilled a greater need to intervene.

Adult interference in the three projects under analysis depended greatly on the nature of the project, and the events in which the children participated. The bigger events, like the Constitutional Review Commission, tended to be formal and more controlled by adults than the other projects. The children

and youth who participated in these events were expected to behave in a decent and respectful way. The participants in such events were aged 6–18 and originated from both rural and urban areas of Ghana and were most often chosen to participate by a teacher or other adults in the community according to guidelines supplied by the relevant organization. A statement was sent out by the organizations to community schools listing the number of children needed, broken down according to gender, rural, urban and disabled, in order to have as diverse a group as possible, though this depended on the level of the event. For example, older and more educated children were chosen for The Constitutional Review Commission than for the other events. When it came to a school's decision of which child should participate, the child's school enrolment and grades counted heavily. For children living in rural areas, the bigger events required travel to cities and participation might take up to two or three days, during which time they were out of school. This meant that a child who was not considered clever or confident by teachers was normally not allowed to participate on the basis that such children should be protected from accruing even greater difficulties in school. Instead teachers chose children who they believe would be able to contribute to the debate and consequently to the good reputation of their school and hometown.

Adult selection of children, such as described here, applied only to child participation in the bigger events. All children interested in child rights issues were allowed and encouraged to join and participate in the child rights clubs in their school from primary to senior educational levels. However, some children complained that their families, especially parents, were not thrilled about their participatory involvement from the start, claiming they would get spoiled or stubborn. The child rights clubs were less formal than the bigger events and the children had more liberty to behave freely and to speak out about their personal opinions. However, the clubs were managed by adult teachers or 'patrons' and the degree to which they allowed children to express themselves and how much the conversations were controlled and the children's opinions were 'corrected' varied greatly between places. The differences relied mostly on the views, focus and interest in the topic of the respective adults rather than the children's social and cultural status or their views and opinions.

In contrast to the child rights clubs, the Curious Minds radio program was almost without adult control and interference. From the beginning the children and youth who participated in Curious Minds were aged 8–18, although at the time of the research the majority were young people aged 14–25. Most of the participants were born and raised in Accra. The youth chose the topic they believed was important to discuss and organized a meeting, which was then aired. They discussed the topic on radio without any adult interference.

The group was, however, under the guidance of one adult whose only duty was to make sure everything was fine and the broadcasting went smoothly.

In the above-mentioned projects, especially the bigger events, adults tended to underestimate children's agency and capacity. Many of the adults were surprised to see and hear the extent to which the children and young people had contributed and admitted that the participation of the latter had increased their respect for children's opinions and capacity. A middle-aged male governmental participant claimed that it would not be possible to ignore children's voices after listening to how smart and sensible they were. A female governmental worker maintained that the organizers of child participation should make sure that the children were not 'brainwashed' by adults before they participated in bigger events; most important was that their voices were definitely heard. Ultimately, all adults participating in the study agreed on the importance of the right of children to participate. They argued that, as human beings, children should be respected as individuals and citizens and be allowed to become involved in society like everyone else. As one female organization worker said:

> They have to talk and discuss what the national development issues are ... They are human beings themselves and should participate in these discussions ... We are getting to the level that we are respecting the voice of children ... It is not seen as an obligation but it is respected and listened to as well.

Children were referred to as 'the future' and as those who would hold power over the next generations. In one child rights club the children were taught a song with the slogan, "We are the future leaders, we are the union of the country". Therefore, according to adult interviewees in the study, it was extremely important to give children a platform from which to speak out, and share their feelings and opinions on matters affecting them. The adults argued that participation could broaden children's minds and allow them to gain understanding of national issues, shaping who they were and who they would become in the future.

Child rights advocates agreed that child rights were increasingly being accepted in Ghana and children were becoming less afraid of being involved. Overall, the adult child advocates believed that young people should be involved in the whole process from preparation to monitoring, analysing and finally decision-making and implementing projects dealing with child-related issues, although there was some lack of congruence concerning who was honestly interested in child rights and participation. The NGO workers pointed

out that the importance attributed to children's views and opinions did not necessarily mean that children's voices would always be taken into account. They argued that, frequently, the higher levels of state authorities ignored children's voices, and were generally uninterested in taking children seriously except when using their ideas in some 'final product' such as project proposals and plans, laws and child-rights covenants. Hence, mainly to look good on the surface, the authorities would argue that involving children was important. The child rights proponents used the phrase 'children should be seen but not heard' to express the authorities' real ideas and intentions when it came to child participation. Children were expected to be visible and share brief views on certain topics to thereby enhance the positive image of the stakeholders. However, in the end, adults should make the decisions while children's role was to sit, listen and learn.

While criticizing the state authorities for paying lip service to children's participation, the child rights advocates acknowledged that children's full participation could be complicated in practice, even when there was a genuine will for its implementation on everyone's part. The full participation of children was costly and time consuming to implement. It was also difficult to ensure that all children could be equally enabled to participate, for instance in urban and rural areas, among boys and girls, young and older alike, and so on. When only urban children were involved, NGOs were accused of discriminating against those living in rural areas.

O'Kane (2003) has pointed out that a lack of common definition and the complexity of the concept of participation has made it difficult for child rights proponents to implement such projects. Furthermore, in line with worries expressed by Landsdown (2010), Malone and Hartung (2010) and Bordonaro and Payne (2012), in practice child participation observed in Ghana was partly dictated by adult involvement. The UNCRC states that all children should be allowed to take part in line with their age and capacity, but how do we know when a child is old enough or capable? The decision as to which child should have the opportunity to participate lies mostly in the hands of adults who make a choice based on their evaluation of the children's individual capacity: that is, proper behaviour, intelligence or performance at school.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the participation of children and young people in Ghana from the viewpoint of adult child rights advocates and young participants. Many platforms have been created in the country from

which children and youth may share opinions on matters concerning them. The study results show that both adults and young people believed these platforms to be a positive improvement for child rights since participation can be beneficial both in present time and in the future. However, cultural traditions, including the age-based hierarchy, were considered a barrier to children's participation. To be able to implement young people's participation without sabotaging the cultural traditions, child rights proponents have emphasized that with rights come responsibilities, an approach also designed to gain approval among the general public. At the same time, it is likely to strengthen adult involvement, although this varies according to the age of participants and the kind of participatory project.

Although some child rights advocates and scholars believe in child participation, others argue that true participation of children is difficult to attain (Baaz 2005; Brown 2004; Cooke and Kothari 2002; Mikkelsen 2005). While our study shows some success in implementing participatory projects for children and youth, there are still hindrances to overcome. Furthermore, the adult child advocates in the study pointed out that child participation is not only complicated but also expensive to implement. Sill, Hart (2008, 418) blames donors and NGOs when he points out that participatory projects tend to fail. He argues that the involved organizations aim "to manage the effects of underdevelopment rather than to achieve meaningful transformation of political and economic realities" (Hart 2008, 416). In a similar vein, Rahman (2010) observes that, indeed, adult involvement in participatory projects is ambiguous and wonders if the training provided by adults is helpful considering that adult absence might be more effective. While blaming the higher authorities for paying lip service to child participation, the adult child rights advocates seem to be unaware of their own manipulation of child participation. This applies in particular to the younger age group, which tended to be more led and controlled by adults while the youth participated more freely.

Further research on child participation is needed, including exploration of its forms, extent, benefits and barriers. While the adult child rights advocates, youth and children in the current study agreed about the benefits of child participation, children's life conditions, educational achievements and age influenced their participation. Is child participation, as it is currently organized by governmental institutions and NGOs, there for everyone? Hart (2008) is concerned with realization of political changes that require political will, renewed alliances and children's participation on their own terms. According to Hart, children must become recognized as political actors, which begs the question: Is real participation of children and young people possible without major societal changes?

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Diaspora as a Multilevel Political Space for Young Somalis

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Introduction

Since the outbreak of the civil war in 1991, Somalis have become one of the largest diaspora populations globally. According to United Nations estimates, the number of people born in Somalia but living outside the country is reaching two million (UN 2015). Due to the prolonged instability in Somalia, diaspora mobilization among Somalis has evolved worldwide and comprises multiple forms of action, both on a collective and individual level (Pirkkalainen 2013, 9). This has produced a number of studies analysing the participation of Somali diaspora communities in social and political projects relating to the future of their former and current home countries (Allen 2014; Sheikh and Healy 2009; Orozco and Yansura 2013; Leitner 2004). Regardless of its scholarly recognition, however, the societal and political participation of the Somali diaspora has been overlooked in the public discussions of their settlement societies (Pirkkalainen et al. 2016). When conducting research on the Somali diaspora in Finland and the United States, we have noticed that this disregard raises concern among its active members; in fact, we have encountered a group of young Somalis who vigorously contest the image of Somalis as incompetent and uninterested bystanders in the affairs of their new home countries.

By focusing on the group of young people which, following Laine (2012, 16–18) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2009) definition, could be considered representatives of the active segment of today's global generation, we wish to take part in the debate concerning migrant transnationalism, belonging and diaspora politics. There are two main arguments presented in the chapter. Firstly, we highlight the importance of 'diasporic micropolitics', that is, the ways in which Somali youth draw on specific diaspora practices and discourses in order to establish themselves as active, capable agents in their new places of residence and as the builders of future Somalia (cf. Laine 2012, 9). Secondly, our aim is to emphasize the role of what Bernal (2014) calls 'infopolitics', consisting of the struggles over identity and positioning which take place online and in digital media. Evidently, today's information technology formulates diaspora

experiences, as well as widening arenas for active participation, especially for youth (Laine 2012).

We find it important to review the emergent forms of diaspora politics from the perspective of young people because the majority of the people who migrate across national borders are young adults (International Labour Organization 2013). Youth are also defined as those creating and living the future of their societies, which offers them a specific role in diaspora politics and postulates an understanding of the younger generation as future decision-makers who should learn to be active participants in societal discussions, as well as citizens who should have political and ideological space for such participation. This said, we are also acutely aware that diaspora citizens often remain in doubly marginalized social positions. They easily lose their interest in, or are left without space to engage with, societal issues, even when these issues concern either their former or current home country (Portes and Zhou 1993; Abdi 2011).

Our analysis is a part of a research project, *Contexts of Diaspora Citizenship* (2012–2016), which has studied the social participation, transnational practices and networks, and forms of social, ethnic, national and transnational identification of Somalis living in the diaspora in Finland and the United States. We are aware that contextual opportunity structures, and their impact, differ considerably in these two territories but no systematic comparison is possible within the space limits of this single analysis. For this chapter, we have analysed interviews of politically active young Somalis in Finland and the United States, as well as blog entries written by young Finnish and American Somalis. Although blogs differ epistemologically from interviews, we have included them in this scrutiny to acknowledge the significance of the Internet as a political arena.

We begin with a brief description of the political contexts and cultures of Finland and the United States, and the status of Somalis as diaspora citizens. After setting out our methodological orientation we present the different political scopes within which our young informants position their political acts and aspirations. This analysis is followed by a glance into the transnational world of blog politics and concluding notions.

Finland and the United States as Contexts for Diaspora Politics

Traditionally, Finland is portrayed as a 'calm' Nordic welfare society without visible political conflicts between divergent population groups. In recent years, however, the dividing lines have deepened and a heated public debate about immigration and integration policies has sprung up in the country. State and municipal authorities have responded to the emerging divisions by developing

programs and projects with the goals of immigrant integration and social participation guarded and guided by legislation (Integration Act 2010).

In terms of the political activity of Finnish Somalis, the picture that emerges from previous research is somewhat contradictory. Even though some 40 per cent of Finnish Somalis are Finnish citizens and Finnish legislation provides non-citizens with a position similar to native Finns, Somalis are not visible in formal politics. There have been no Somalis in the national parliament thus far, and only a few Finnish Somalis have been elected to municipal councils. However, research by Pirkkalainen et al. (2016) has demonstrated that, in comparison to other migrant groups such as those born in Russia or Estonia, Somalis are active voters, particularly at the municipal level where the majority of them have the right to vote. They have also set up several civic organizations. Still, Somali immigrants in Finland face many challenges to integration. The electoral participation and voter turnout of immigrants in Finland is very low, and in the case of Somalis the situation is worsened by their poor socioeconomic position, which tends to correlate with low political participation (Pirkkalainen et al. 2016). The situation of second generation Finnish Somalis seems to be slightly better, but still far from good (Matikka et al. 2013; Harinen and Sabour 2013).

In the United States the integration of immigrants is carried out by local communities, rather than by state or federal authorities. This *laissez-faire* approach to integration relies on a strong labour market that offers entry-level openings for newcomers (Fix 2007); Somali immigrants have managed to access it rather better in the United States than in Finland or elsewhere in Europe (Carlson et al. 2012; United States Census Bureau 2011a). Young Somalis are also fairly well represented in higher education (United States Census Bureau 2011b), and they have proven to be a significant political force, especially in the state of Minnesota (Yusuf 2012). But the story of the American Somali diaspora also has a flipside, as poverty, discrimination and alienation are pushing many young Somalis to the margins of society (Abdi 2011; Brown 2011; Mulligan 2009).

However, the formal system of political parties and representative democracy is not the only possible way for young immigrants to participate politically. Finland, for example, offers space and possibilities for people to organize themselves into registered associations to defend their rights, which might concern fields such as environmental issues, children's welfare, mothers' everyday life and various minority rights. The Finnish government supports associations in many ways and encourages people to establish them. As an example, financial support is given to Somali associations to carry out development work in Somalia. In the United States, NGOs and various community-based organizations also provide an important platform for diasporic citizens'

participation. As the role of the state is limited with regards many issues relevant to immigrant integration, such as language and civic education, as well as employment training and social services, diaspora communities have been involved with, and have founded, organizations to provide these services. Many of these organizations also have a role as platforms through which diaspora communities have a voice to negotiate and cooperate with the state and local officials. For example, Somali organizations have cooperated successfully with state agencies in refugee resettlement. Finally, these organizations also channel the concerns of the community and facilitate quick responses to emerging problems (Kananen 2016; Haverinen and Kananen 2016).

Despite these alternatives for societal participation, Finnish and North American public discourses still contain the implicit principles that political socialization is the same as acquiring the action logic of formal and slow representative decision making. While the interviewees chosen for this chapter are mainly young Somalis who have been candidates in municipal or national political elections and are thus members of established national political parties, their experiences also reveal some 'diaspora perspectives' of politics as a means to change the current state of affairs more widely than just at the national level, as well as mixtures of formal and non-formal ways to conduct transnational politics. Furthermore, the discussion revolving around the concept of 'mediatized migrant' is relevant to our case (Hepp et al. 2012).

The concept of 'micropolitics' is used to analyse the participation of individuals and groups in civil society, as well as to examine the connections between affective registers of experience and collective identities. For example, Bennett and Shapiro (2002) outline how a focus on micropolitics offers an insight into ways in which reforming, refining or disciplining one's emotions, urges and moods enter into one's political programs, party affiliations, ideological commitments and policy preferences. The notion of micropolitics is central to our interpretative analysis as the expressions of political aspirations by our young informants were coloured by their unique – and often also traumatic – life histories and the feelings that they carry with them. Secondly, as Pirkkalainen (2013) notes, civic and political participation can provide individual Somalis with a positive identity and recognition, which they otherwise may lack. Furthermore, it is important to connect this discussion with debates on the mediatization of lives, and transnational lives in particular. Diasporas are nowadays "mediatized", which means that the articulation of their political claims is deeply interwoven with, and moulded by, different forms of media (Hepp et al. 2012). Following in the footsteps of Bernal (2014), we use blogs as one example of the ways in which active Somali youth today deploy the Internet to support and make their micropolitical claims.

The Methodological Orientation for the Analysis

The data for this analysis consist of interviews and blog entries. In Finland six young Somalis (two women, four men) born in Somalia, arriving in Finland in their early years and participating in political life were interviewed. Now they have settled in the country, learned the language, educated themselves and taken up active social positions in formal politics and / or as civic activists. In the United States, interviews were also conducted with six young Somalis (five men, one woman) who define themselves as politically active. Four of them have been candidates in local or national elections. They were born in Somalia, but migrated to the United States either as children or adolescents. They all live in the state of Minnesota, and they all have a college degree. The interviews focused on, among other issues, their life histories and current feelings, experiences of decision making, and political aspirations and dreams. Our interviewees represent a specific group among young diasporic Somalis: they have consciously decided to get involved with politics. The analysis therefore does not include the voices of those young Somalis who are not socially and politically active and who, in a traditional sense, are excluded from mainstream political citizenship (see Marshall 1950). We, however, argue for a need to bring to the fore the views and opinions of active young Somalis, who tend to be overshadowed by the problematic media representations of Somalis and Somalia (Fellin 2015).

Because the Internet offers an effective arena for transnational sub-politics (Laine 2012), we have examined 18 blogs by Somali American authors and six blogs by Finnish Somali authors for this chapter. Some of the bloggers are active young politicians or civic activists, while others claim to write from the perspective of 'ordinary' young people. We have included blogs in order to acknowledge the significance of the Internet as a political arena for the diaspora, while acknowledging the methodological concerns related to the use of Internet materials (representation and authenticity). The blog entries selected for analysis are those in which the authors specify themselves as Somalis taking a stand on issues related to Somalia or Somali diaspora. The entries cannot, therefore, be considered as representative of the views of young Somalis but rather comprise political statements about the political orientations and positioning of Somalis in their respective countries and internationally.

Interview and blog data were analysed by a method referred to as "dialogical thematization" by Koski (2011), a phenomenological process of data deconstruction and reconstruction. We have read all data sets with the goal of identifying expressions that can be interpreted as encapsulating political

ideas and experiences. During the deconstructive stage we followed the phenomenological rules of interpretation when seeking 'the biggest common denominators' for different expressions in order to give names to wider themes recognized in the data. These young people make political claims in different arenas: the transnational sphere is very important to them, but equally so are national and local agendas. The next section presents analysis of the political passion and mission of our informants.

Diaspora Youth as Agents for Glocal Micropolitics

In our interview data, the life histories of young Somalis are accorded different interpretations and meanings. First, they serve as a source of special strength and wisdom. Experiences of war fronts, refugee camps or racist attacks have provided these young people with an understanding of what societies really need in order to build a better future – which is usually seen as the main aim of any political process. The informants of this analysis, for example, claim that since they have the experience of collecting "dead bodies there, on the fronts", they also have a particular kind of understanding that could offer a lot to societal discussion in societies where people lack such experiences and insights.

Secondly, these young people are also acutely aware that their life histories as immigrants and members of diaspora can put them at risk of becoming eternal outsiders. As the experiences of the past are hard to shake off, it can be that they cannot find their place anywhere but, as one interviewee put it, "their bodies just move around here but their heads are not with them". However, the argumentation strategy that positions past difficulties as a resource that people can utilize if given an equal opportunity is common among the interviewees. It also goes against the common perception of the experiences of war and fleeing being a hindrance that people must overcome in order to succeed in their later lives. The informants, generally speaking, wish to draw on these experiences to negotiate their way through the multilevel political environment they are interested in influencing – to be presented in the following sections.

Here, There and Everywhere?
The nation-level political aspirations of our informants reach from issues of their immediate neighbourhoods to two national contexts: the state of current residence, and Somalia as an indelible target for a mission of future development. In municipal and state-level politics these young people would

like to create their dominant political identities, and to be treated, as representatives of 'ordinary' inhabitants and not as representatives of immigrants – as the case often seems to be:

> I'm not an immigrant but I'm [informant's name] and a candidate for [city's name] municipal court. And I have competence for that. So that they don't see me … I, actually, have warned them … if they … again begin to give me that stigma and say I'm an immigrant.
>
> That this big party, a party with power, feels that I, a tiny person from Africa, [who has] just received education here, feels [what I say is] so important that it's published in a nation-wide political manifest. I'm allowed to [have] effect in politics, and after being here for a year they suggested me as a director for [city's] youth association. No one considered me as a black man, as a Somali, as a Muslim; in this company I'm a member of the party.

As most of our interviewees are members of a political party in their current states of residence, and have run for office in parliamentary or municipal elections, it is hardly surprising that they describe their political activities within the national framework of state politics. However, many of them also actively participate in transnational activities and projects. Common diaspora activities include, for example, forming voluntary associations, arranging ad hoc funding raising and implementing development project through NGOs and INGOs (see also Pirkkalainen 2013, 9). As individuals, people also participate in transnational activities by sending remittances to their relatives and by engaging in politics and businesses and thus transferring their skills and knowhow to their country of origin. Their loyalty as activists, however, is not exhausted in the dual roles in the country of origin and the country of residence: participation in politics and civic actions provides them a platform to act as political advocates on a transnational and even global level. This readiness for manifold advocacy can lead a young future-builder into energetic international participation:

> I'm a member of an organization, the Finnish Somali Diaspora Association, acting world-wide; we discuss and develop and seek means to [have] effect, use the knowhow received in diaspora in our own home country, Somalia. I'm in this forum. And now, during the summer I will travel to Canada where there is a big discussion and I'll go there to represent the Finnish Somali diaspora.

Somalia – in Terms of Her Future

Laine (2012) has paid attention to the transnational dimensions of making politics that touch on the concrete and 'small' issues of ordinary people wherever they might live – cosmopolitan micropolitics, as she calls them. The young people who were interviewed for this analysis, especially the Finnish Somalis, can be interpreted as cosmopolitan micropoliticians who are concerned for human inequalities and suffering, as well as the bellicosity of the world. In this context, the notion of being a Somali with a special understanding of war, violence, oppression and their effects is, again, emphasized. While acknowledging the scope of young Somalis' political activity, which may stretch from local to national and even cosmopolitan politics, we will next focus on their relationship with their 'diasporic home': Somalia.

In many political addresses, the task of rebuilding Somalia, a country damaged by war, is loaded onto the shoulders of the younger generations. Young people are expected to unite the intellectual, political and educational power they have developed in the diaspora and deliver it through transnational Somali networks. Our interviewees left Somalia at an early age, and they have their homes in the diasporic destination, but there is considerable evidence of their continuing tight connections to Somalia. For many young Somali politicians Somalia is the target of their diasporic-issue politics, connecting them into an active imagined community (Anderson 1991), and constructing campaigns, attitudes and emotions towards it. Many diasporic Somalis have ambitious plans regarding the political future of Somalia. As an example, Fadumo Dayib, who moved to Finland in the 1990s, has decided to run as a candidate in the Somali presidential election in 2016 (Finnish Broadcasting Company 2014). On an individual level, however, the question of one's relationship with the country of origin becomes concrete when the possible return to Somalia is discussed. Somalia has recently reached a level of some stability, and many Somalis have started to visit Somalia and even to repatriate (Hautaniemi et al. 2013). The interviewees of this study still have ambivalent thoughts about returning to Somalia, however. Even though none of them is considering a certain and permanent repatriation, many of them express a wish to just visit Somalia and use the skills and resources that they have acquired in diaspora to help in the rebuilding process.

> I may try to go back this summer, but I'm not 100% sure. It all depends. I think Mogadishu, to me, is a lost case. … but I think small towns with 5,000 to 6,000 people, I can go there, go to their local school, train their teachers, take some books, give there.

Unlike in the United States, where the young Somali informants generally envision returning to Somalia as private individuals and contributing to the rebuilding process through their personal skills and relationships, our Finnish informants often consider going back to Somalia through an NGO or INGO engaged in the rebuilding process. These active young people do not want to go back to Somalia just to visit family and friends but express a wish to achieve something societally meaningful, to make a difference:

> [I]n diaspora ... well, we have developmental cooperation, we have almost 25 member organizations doing developmental cooperation into Somalia from different parts of the world; I'm the chair in this, it's interesting and challenging. I've been there from the very beginning, I'm the only woman there, and though it's developmental cooperation the organizations have learned a lot from each other [about] how cooperation could be done in Somalia. The organizations act in different areas but they are connected by developmental work and Somalia, so that's why it's so positive.
>
> Now when there is peace in Mogadishu, I visited it, getting to know a bit more and planning; next summer I'll go there and we'll organize a big seminar and I definitely want a political perspective to it, activating women, so that women cooperate and learn to support young women's participation.

Virtual Border Crossings

Although young Somalis often feel politically responsible for doing their share to rebuild Somalia, their relationship to the homeland is complex. A young Somali blogger, *DrinkingTeainMogadishu*, from Minnesota, moved to Somalia for a year to work for a NGO, and her posts around that time provide an overview of the challenges that diaspora youth might be up against in the homeland. The dream of going back started with the frustration of being a Muslim in Minnesota. But once this politically active blogger got to Somalia, she realized that the return to homeland was not as easy as she had hoped it would be (cf. also Hautaniemi et al. 2013).

> Before I went to Somalia, I always defined myself as being 'Somali'. I was very proud to be Somali and that for sure gave me something to hold onto as an identity in the United States. When I was going to Somalia, I was so excited to be going there, and to be embraced by my 'people'. To be in the land of my ancestors, in my 'homeland' ... I was in for a major shock after staying there for a couple of months. I didn't understand the people

> there, it's like everything I grew up considering 'normal' in America, was strange to my fellow Somali 'brethren' in Somalia. There were times I felt I related more to a white American than the Somalis there. ... You can say when I went to Somalia, I turned very North American.

In addition to cultural differences, this blogger also experienced a tense, exclusive relationship between the local Somalis and diaspora Somalis. Diaspora itself also seems to have the power to break down the imagined community (Anderson 1991) when it comes to a concrete share of soil and commons:

> One word that I picked up since being in Somalia is the term 'diaspora'. This word is used by the locals here to describe Somalis from places outside of Somalia, in most cases Europe, Canada or the United States. When I first heard this word used on me, I never thought much of it because it's obviously true that I'm from the US. However, the more I continue to hear this word, I came to think negatively about it. I feel like it's a word that divides people. Many people here in Somalia don't want Somalis to come back from abroad. They feel threatened because they believe those people will take their jobs, or in the case of men from abroad end up marrying local women. [...] This just shows they view Somalis from overseas as a different form of entity, and it's really sad because a lot of Somalis simply come back to Somalia to help out with the situation in Somalia.

This finding has also been noted in other studies (Allen 2014; Galipo 2011). Although the first expatriate generation is commonly welcomed by the local population, members of the second generation can be perceived as foreigners and blamed for not integrating into the community and not knowing its traditions and history. In Somalia political capabilities embraced in the diaspora might not always receive a positive welcome, or get an opportunity to become active political forces. It also seems that even though the second generation is doing a little better in their settlement countries, they may not manage well in Somalia. In a way, this phenomenon can be defined as the fatal paradox of diaspora exclusion.

Still, even if young people cannot participate in the politics or rebuilding of Somalia in a traditional sense, they may have a strong virtual connection with the Somali diaspora. They exchange experiences, memories, ideas and images about Somalia online, to conduct 'virtual rebuilding' of Somalia (cf. Anderson 1991). Some of the discussants have never been in Somalia and some moved away at a young age, so they do not necessarily have concrete ideas of

the country. This, however, does not stop them from cooperatively construct-ing the ideal Somalia online with other debaters.

A common phenomenon in blogs is the presentation of Somalia in a new light through pictures, videos and stories that stand in stark contrast to im-ages prevailing in traditional media: war, famine and poverty. Discursively con-structed images of the new Somalia depict beautiful landscapes, green forests and unspoiled nature. Mogadishu beach, which was recently opened to the public, is one of the symbols of this new Somalia. Further, young bloggers also share videos and stories that emphasize development and the 'normality' of everyday life. For example, one posts videos that introduce new small busi-nesses in Somalia. Another (Vintage Somalia 2013) posts pictures of pre-war era Somalia and summarizes his motivation for blogging and the connection between political aims and emotions such as optimism:

> It is important more now than ever to participate and take part in the rebuilding of Somalia. We must have unwavering hope. Somalia will be-come a developed nation. The spark has already been lit. It is up to us and the young Somalis living in Somalia and across the world now to also take part and help in the rebuilding of our homeland even better than it was before.

The Internet provides young people with an opportunity to cross the borders that they face in their everyday lives. It functions as an arena for identity poli-tics and for transgressing the national to connect their personal choices with political and ideological commitments. By posting entries on their struggles to express themselves as Finns, Americans or Somalis, or alternatively by making claims about the need to escape attempts to define their identities, bloggers take part in the on-going discussion of what it means to be a young member of an ethnic minority in diaspora. They also use the Internet to fight racism and other inequalities that they face in their diasporic everyday life and recognize world-wide.

An example of an attempt to connect personal with political is a long discus-sion chain on the online forum of a Finnish youth magazine *Demi* in which a 17-year-old Somali girl has made it her task to answer any question the readers raise. The topics range from hair tips and favourite school subjects to ques-tions concerning religion, racism and the positioning of Somalis in Finland. By placing herself and her opinions under scrutiny, she takes up the collec-tive position of a Somali who mediates between people of 'her kind' and other Internet-users. Although the discussion takes place in Finnish, it is possible for any Internet-user to participate. This is just one example: there are numerous

other sites where people discuss and define the particularities of Somali identity and diaspora, for example, in Somali, English or French.

The Internet also provides young Somalis a space to express their transnational belongings and take part in international debates concerning controversial issues, such as female circumcision or the treatments of Muslims in Western media. Interestingly, young Somalis often use art and poetry to present, construct and modify their connection to Somalia, and to make their voices heard on political issues. Somalia is known as the 'nation of poets' and young Somalis have picked up this tradition as there are several blogs devoted solely to Somali poetry. Minnesota-based *Poet Nation* has taken a youthful, urban approach to poetry, and the site hosts performances on various topics. Although *Poet Nation* focuses on the lives of diaspora youth, they have also visited a refugee camp in Kenya and recorded many Somalis reciting their poetry. These kinds of online activities provide an interesting example of the vitality and revitalization of a national tradition in the diaspora. However, the common denominator for all the different types of blogs is the passion of the outspoken young people to make their voices heard.

Concluding Remarks

> My political career, my dream is that I could [have] effect on issues also elsewhere than in Finland, also in my expatriate country Somalia, Africa, especially women's position, women's and girls' participation in politics, especially immigrants' participation and … yeah, equality and female participation, that equality could be seen in immigrant women's lives.

Young people as political actors have recently been under scrutiny, as a concern for their political passivity and ignorance has been expressed in public discourses. Youth research has aimed at challenging this general image by showing changes in ideas and conceptualizations of the phenomenon of making politics (Edmunds and Turner 2005; Bang 2009; Laine 2012). The young Somalis interviewed for this analysis are convinced that they could act as a new political force both in Somalia and in their new countries of residence. Their newness (Bhabha 1994) is brought about by their specific experiences as refugees and as people in diaspora, and they thus represent themselves as being liberated from the traditional nation-state frames, references and action scopes. Their experiences confirm Beck's and Beck-Gernsheim's (2009) analysis: global processes and communication technology, as well as the current waves and ways of migration, create spaces for transnational belongings and ideologies,

diasporic life experiences and life histories, as well as people's cosmopolitan identifications. Diaspora politicians turn their ideological aspirations in directions that are often categorized as 'glocal' as they seem to be interested in political participation where issues of, for example, human rights are defended in locally executed but transnationally organized happenings (cf. Laine 2012).

The scope of political interest among these societally active Somalis is wide and multileveled. They can change their perspective from immediate environments and their problems via state level politics to global grievances. They also show a willingness to act, and to call for changes. They look at gender inequality and women's positions in the global framework, strive for peace in Somalia and feel concern for human rights issues in Africa. As political advocates they do not connect themselves only to their country of residence but also to Somalia which, over the years, has provided them with specific experiences and emotions. Somalia is described by them as a promising society in need of many political improvements: starting from the state system and stretching to people's relationships and interaction in terms of gender and generations.

The Internet does not make it possible to escape local realities, but it provides an access to new kinds of information and a chance to connect with people who are not part of one's immediate social surroundings. Young bloggers use the Internet, for example, to raise money for families in Somalia and to take part in international debates about female circumcision and counter racist sentiments, as well as to discuss tendencies in their new home countries. The Internet also functions as an important platform for identity politics (Bang 2009). Young people use blogs and on-line discussion forums to express their multiple belongings as well as to share their experiences of what it means to be a young member of an ethnic minority living in diaspora. Lastly, the Internet is an arena that brings global diaspora youth together as an active imagined community, constructing and reconstructing campaigns, attitudes and emotions towards the homeland.

The social and socio-economic position of diaspora Somalis in the two national contexts of our informants is still in many ways problematic. They are aware of this and seek recognition as serious participants in multi-levelled politics. They perceive themselves as candidates representing 'ordinary, local people' and not 'immigrants' – but also claim recognition for their special understanding as people who have seen more than 'ordinary people'. If this wisdom connected with their specific life-histories is recognized, it can have extended political value: diasporic life helps people to understand oppression, suffering, multiculturalism and the needs of very different inhabitants

in society. Young people who have experienced the life of a refugee could offer new, unique insights into local, national and global political processes.

In the material analysed for this chapter, diaspora youth come across as actors with political passion and willpower. Instead of complaining about their political passivity, this engagement could be taken seriously and room could be given to them to express themselves as political actors. If the message of young activists is not taken seriously, it is likely that they will either withdraw themselves from societal action or find a way to express themselves elsewhere.

> I, as an immigrant, have tried and tried to take responsibility, and rights too, but sometimes it feels that you are stigmatized; those immigration critics irritate me so much. I [wonder] why they give us a possibility to come here if it's so negative, if immigrants make people so anxious. It's contradictory, it's good that people discuss but this never seems to end.

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Addressing Sexual Violence in South Africa: 'Gender activism in the making'

Claudia Mitchell, Naydene de Lange and Relebohile Moletsane

Introduction

"What would it really mean to study the world from the standpoints of children [adolescent girls] both as knowers and as actors?" asks sociologist Ann Oakley (1994, 24). To this we add the questions: What approaches, mechanisms and structures would make it possible for girls and young women, as knowers and actors, to influence social policy and social change in the context of sexual violence? To what extent might this work deepen an understanding of gender activism amongst youth? This chapter seeks to deepen an understanding of girls and young women's political activism in relation to sexual violence by studying what we term here 'gender activism' and 'in the making' in relation to a group of 14 girls and young women from rural South Africa enrolled at a university in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The young women participated in a project, Girls Leading Change, which aimed to address sexual violence on campus. We use the term 'activism in the making' as a way to signal the nature of our own involvement as adult researchers, but also to problematize the public face of activism in the area of sexuality and sexual violence carried out in a mainstream institutional environment. While Girls Leading Change builds on a number of different components of community involvement in relation to sexual violence, in this chapter we focus on the ways that the young women engaged with a number of different campus-based policy makers in looking at sexual violence. In so doing, we consider the significance of gender and political activism as critical to altering the policy landscape for addressing sexual violence in institutions.

As has been highlighted in numerous studies, South Africa has one of the highest rates of sexual assault in the world, and while absolute numbers are unreliable because of under-reporting, adolescent girls and young women are particularly at risk. Compounding the under-reporting of sexual assault is the fact that rates of prosecution are low; a 2005 study indicates that fewer than 1 per cent of cases actually result in a conviction. According to the ANC

Women's Caucus (1998), "before her 18th birthday one in three South African girls will be sexually assaulted". There is a consistent (and unrelenting) possibility of sexual violence that runs counter to girls' safety and security in schools and communities, and to their reproductive health, particularly in the context of HIV and AIDS (Moletsane, Mitchell and Lewin 2015). As Gqola (2016, 5) highlights in *Rape: A South African Nightmare*, the situation is very much one of what she terms "pornography of an empire". As she notes: "although all women are in danger of rape, Black women are the most likely to be raped. It is not for the reasons that would seem to be 'logical' or obvious. It has little to do with numbers and much to do with how rape and race have historically intersected in mutually reinforcing ways" (ibid. 5).

There is clearly no one initiative or set of interventions that can be regarded as the answer to addressing the widespread incidence of sexual violence in the lives of girls and young women, and indeed – as we highlight in an introductory essay in an issue of *Agenda* meant to focus on interventions addressing sexual violence (Mitchell and De Lange 2015) – there are many more articles about the situation than there are about sustainable interventions. A promising area, though, is the fact that various governments in both the Global North and Global South have begun to study how the development and implementation of a youth strategy might play out in relation to a variety of thematic areas of importance to youth. Some studies focus on participation, agency and citizenship (Alparone and Rissotto 2001; Camino and Zeldin 2002; Combe 2002; Denov and Gervais 2007; Fielding 2007; Gaunle and Adhikari 2010; Hallett and Prout 2003; Livingstone, Bober and Helsper 2004; Livingstone and Tsatasou 2009; Mackinnon and Watling 2006), while others look at targeted areas such as youth sexuality (Mitchell, Weber and Yoshida 2008).

Another angle on political activism is to consider the question of what form the public voice of young people might take. To date this has been studied largely in the arena of online activism. Rheingold (2008) and Jenkins (2009) note, for example, that when adolescents and young adults engage with online participatory cultures and digital communication (blogging, social media networking, instant-messaging and online sharing of user-generated content), they are learning to develop a public voice. Civic engagement (political activism, deliberation, problem solving) requires the effective use of a public voice (Levine 2008; Rheingold 2008). According to Levine (2008, 120), "a public voice is always one that can persuade other people – beyond the closest friends and family – to take action on shared issues". Levine differentiates a private voice as one that is not intended to interest a community or to address their concerns. An example of a private voice, Levine explains, is an e-mail or a social networking site that is meant for people close to the author. In contrast,

a political blog is an example of a public voice, where the author expresses opinions or perspectives on current issues to draw in or influence a larger audience. A public voice, however, is not limited to addressing political matters, but also comprises cultural production, where engaged people come together in communities or associations. Topics thus extend beyond politics to include discussing bad software, how to fix technical problems and poor customer service, for example. While such topics may be issues that belong to the private sector, Levine (2008) argues that once they are made to reach a larger audience through media such as blogs, they represent a public voice. Rheingold (2008, 101) adds that this "voice [is] the unique style of personal expression that distinguishes one's communication from those of others. Moving from a private to a public voice can help students turn their self-expression into a form of public participation". A public voice is not just active, but also generative.

Much of this work on public voice and civic engagement remains gender neutral, or privileges male youth as participants, although as Caron, Raby, Mitchell, Thewissen-Leblanc and Prioletta (2016) note in their study of the vlogs posted on YouTube produced by Canadian young people that are examples of what they term "social change-oriented youth voices", both males and females can be speaking out on issues of feminism and sexual violence in ways that challenge normative practices. In studies that do focus on the participation of girls and young women in addressing gender violence, the notion of how this work can inform policy and programming is typically neglected or offered as 'next steps'. At the same time, emerging work within feminist studies and girlhood studies looks at how girls and young women might themselves shape policies (see Mitchell 2011; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008). How might this work inform an agenda of "learning from the ground up" (Kapoor and Choudry 2010) through the political activism of girls and young women?

Activism and Political Engagement

Studying Girls and Political Identity

To date the idea of young women and activism in relation to sexual violence remains understudied although there is an emerging body of work on young women as activists (see MacKay 2011; Taft 2010; Trigg 2010) that helps to frame this chapter. Taft's work, in particular, is central to raising questions about the political identity of girls and young women. As she observes in *Rebel Girls*:

> Girls' activism is an extremely underexplored scholarly topic, largely invisible in the academic literatures on girlhoods and on social movements.

> Research in the growing field of girls' studies has focused primarily on girls' self-esteem and psychology, sexuality and sexual behavior, friendships, schools and peer relationships, media consumption, production and cultural practice, and issues of growing up and constructing identities in various contexts.
>
> TAFT 2010, 8

As she goes on to comment: "These works often describe girls' acts of resistance to dominant gender norms, or address girls' consumption of commodified versions of feminism, but very few have made girls' politics or political identities the central focus of study" (Taft 2010, 8). Taft describes activist strategies of girls and young women in North and Latin America in which girls spoke about the value of political education as an activist tool, highlighting the place of teach-ins, cultural events, screening of films and so on. She notes one significant difference between girls in North America and girls in Latin America where girls have a mastery of political language. As she writes: "Compared to their North American peers, Latin American girls have more places where they can practice expressing their critical knowledge, expand on their skills of political analysis, and learn more extensive political vocabularies" (Ibid., 109). As a consequence, Latin American girls expressed more confidence in formal political spaces than North American girls, who struggled to find the right political language to voice their needs and concerns.

Young Women's Activism in Addressing Sexual Violence in South Africa

We know that many South African youth have taken centre stage as political activists at various points over the last four decades. Notwithstanding the critique of what this meant in terms of 'lost childhoods' or 'lost youth' (see for example Jolly 2010), the dismantling of apartheid can be traced to the youth protests in Soweto in 1976, although the specific role of girls and young women has been overshadowed by the study of youth masculinities and violence in the struggle (see for example Marks 2001). Many young people also played a key role in the activities of the Treatment Action Campaign, calling for the roll out of ARVs, but also for awareness raising more broadly with regards the need for sexuality education in connection with HIV and AIDS. However, the particular political angle of this work is less well developed than activism more generally (see Walsh, Mitchell and Smith 2002; Mitchell 2015), and the role of girls and young women is not a key theme (see also Jungar and Oinas 2010). But what does activism and political engagement look like when we seek both a gendered lens and a youth lens, and particularly in relation to

addressing sexual violence? To what extent can there be an activist agenda to combat sexual violence for girls and young women who are at the very same time themselves discovering and performing their sexual identities? While South African girls and young women bear the brunt of negative socio-economic outcomes, there is scant literature on their activism in addressing these issues.

A few exemplary projects and writings about the activism of girls and young women in South Africa are emerging. These all point to the scarcity of young women's participation in the country as a whole, but more specifically on university campuses and in various civil society organizations. For example, in an examination of the gender dynamics in the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and especially the glaring absence of women in leadership positions in the organization, Mbali (2009, 1) writes:

> ... while women AIDS activists have challenged sexism in wider society in the post-apartheid period, sexism has simultaneously acted as a barrier to their ascent to leadership positions within AIDS activist organisations.

Further, the author observes that even when women are in leadership positions or, in many cases, are in the forefront of the activism within these organizations, it is usually the men to whom the public, including the media, turn for commentary. Identifying poverty and sexism as two interacting factors that inhibit women's appointment to leadership positions, she argues for economic policies that promote adequate funding for a women's-rights approach to addressing HIV and AIDS.

Focusing on the challenges and triumphs of young women's activism in higher education institutions, Bennett and Chigudu (2012) edited an issue of *Feminist Africa* titled, "Researching Sexuality with Young Women: Southern Africa". In their editorial, citing the work of Teresa Barnes (2007), they suggest that "most higher educational institutions are actively hostile to feminist notions of what it may mean to strengthen women's independence, and simultaneously wary of the use of gender within socio-political education" (Bennett and Chigudu 2012, 4). Consequently, with a few exceptions (such as the community theatre collective, the Mothertongue Project or the Ignition Project in Cape Town), as the authors observe, it is not always obvious how activism is driven by young women themselves. However, as Oinas (2015) observes, there may be a need for greater nuance in studying the activist practices of young women. What are the consequences for young women who come forward on issues that are sensitive and that could make them particularly vulnerable? Who defines which struggles are political or activist?

In the same issue of the *Feminist Agenda* noted above, Bennett reports on a Ford Foundation-funded action research project involving young women in several southern African universities "which undertook to raise consciousness, as 'research', about what young women were experiencing around questions of sexuality on their campuses, and to trace and theorize 'action' initiated by each team which aimed to challenge and transform (if only for a day) the campus" (Bennett 2012, 22). The teams in the different countries focused largely on the issue of 'reproductive security' in which the young women addressed questions related to gender-based violence and policy, the politics of space and sexuality, the meaning of HIV-prevention campaigns and the politics of gender and sexual pleasure. From the various projects, Bennett observes that while the young women were willing to explore ideas of sexual pleasure, they were reluctant "(initially) to take active leadership within campus cultures around the promotion of ordinary ... ideas about women's rights to control their own fertility, sexual pleasure, and sexual experience" (Bennett 2012, 24).

Lewis, Tigist and Van Vuuren (2013), drawing on Wasserman's (2010, 10) notion of how popular culture might be seen as a "platform for the articulation of controversial or popular political views", examine the ways in which young people in South Africa have used media platforms for alternative forms of activism. In their article, they suggest that young women, often marginalized by their age and sex, tend to use such media platforms as cognitive spaces in which they can voice their ideas about the social, cultural and political issues that impact on them. The authors observe that young women in the Cape Town area use media platforms such as Facebook, and technologies such as cellphones and websites to express themselves on a variety of civic issues. The young women adapt these spaces into activist tools and forums in which they often voice their concerns, including sexual and other forms of violence they face in the home, the community and institutions. Citing the 'Confessions' movement on Facebook as an example of civic engagement among young women students enrolled in three universities in South Africa (University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape and Rhodes University), the authors observe that 'Confessions' has provided opportunities for many young women to voice their experiences of abuse, including sexual abuse. Commenting on the courage of one young woman who wrote about her sexual abuse, they conclude:

> It seems to be her "facelessness" that gives her the power to speak out, to create a sense of solidarity which establishes the link between her own experience and interpretation of violation and the political realities of young women's routine subjection to violence, often in schools or universities. In many ways, then, the widespread use of social media

among many young women – whether platforms are set up for them or serve broader purposes – creates opportunities for their expression about "personal" and daily communication that more traditional forms of mobilising and action tend to neglect. And opportunities for such frank communication about the everyday can offer crucial routes into consciousness-raising and transformative politics among young South African women.

LEWIS, TIGIST and VAN VUUREN 2013, 52

In 2016 universities in South Africa were in the grip of a #FeesMustFall movement – student activism to open access to university for eligible young men and women from poor and middle class backgrounds – which intends to facilitate greater transformation. Within this context of transformation, young women students at university were also protesting against their lived experiences of sexual violence and focusing on disrupting existing patterns of sexual violence. A university in the Eastern Cape province was the first to see young women students' activism against a perceived 'rape culture' at their university – with the young women publishing on the internet what they called a 'reference list' of male students who had perpetrated sexual violence and demanding that the university acts against the offenders. The women students used their bodies as a form of protest, some baring their breasts. Their picketing was met with resistance from the university leadership, eventually through an interdict barring them from accessing the campus, and with hard-handed treatment from the police (being picked up and goaled) although their picketing was legal (Charter 2016a, see also Charter 2016b).

To commemorate Women's Day in August, 2016, the Human Sciences Research Council hosted a seminar entitled *Sexual Violence on University Campuses: The Limits and Possibilities of Protest*, where Irene de Vos from the General Counsel of the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) – who acted as counsel for the #RUReferenceList women – pointed out how the treatment of the picketing #RUReferenceList women students differed from the treatment of the protesters in the #FeesMustFall movement in the same university town. In spite of their right to picket and petition – as indicated in Sections 16 and 17 of the Constitution – police entered the campus and then used stun grenades, tear gas and rubber bullets, while some university staff described the protesting women as a 'wild angry mob'; moreover, the university got an interdict against the women students protesting in #RUReferenceList but not, at that time, against the students in the #FeesMustFall protest. The picketing that took place at a university in Eastern Cape spread to other universities signalling that the time for universities to stop sweeping the rape culture

under the carpet to protect the name of the university and stop protecting the male perpetrators was over, and that universities should ensure that policies are tightened and implemented, changing how universities and other institutions respond to reporting rape.

Another recent demonstration of gender activism occurred when President Zuma of South Africa spoke after the local municipal elections held in August 2016. Four young women silently stood on the stage with their placards reading "Remember Khwezi" while the president was speaking. Khwezi is the pseudonym for the late Fezeka Kuzwayo, the young woman who accused the president of raping her. As February (2016) points out, "[t]his seems to be no country for women who accuse powerful men of rape", for after Zuma's acquittal, Khwezi needed to flee the country and go into exile. The protesting young women were not only refocusing the country's attention on Khwezi's plight, but were also pointing out Zuma's denigration of women and ambiguity on women's rights issues.

To summarize, while many researchers and feminists bemoan the dearth of gender activism among young women often marginalized by sex and age in communities and institutions, it is clear that the situation is changing.

Exploring Gender Activism among Rural Girls and Young Women in the Eastern Cape: The Case of Girls Leading Change

In exploring the gender activism of girls and young women in South Africa, we take as one case a consideration of the 'activism in the making' practices of a group of 14 young women with whom we have been working in the Girls Leading Change project at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth in Eastern Cape. As noted above, the place of adults in youth activist movements (and even 'who is a youth?') is not straightforward; both adults and young people participated in some movements in South Africa, such as the Treatment Action Campaign. Our own involvement in this project started with initiating the work in the first place, as women academics, working in Higher Education Institutions in South Africa. Naydene's position in the study is particularly one of an 'insider' at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, holding the position of Chair in HIV and AIDS Education.

When the 14 participants first came together under the name Girls Leading Change (chosen by the participants), we were interested in what a girl-led initiative on addressing sexual violence might look like. How might the participants offer a perspective that puts those who are most at risk in a position to take action? It is beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a complete

analysis of all the work of this group, which has extended over a period of three years. During that time the participants have created cellphilms about sexual violence, produced policy posters and authored action briefs. Long after the young women had presented their policy posters and action briefs to some of the policy makers on campus, it was clear that they had much more to say and, indeed, perhaps speaking to these policy makers was only a small part of what needed to be said. In one of the follow-up sessions where the young women had an opportunity to reflect on the processes thus far, it was evident that talking about sexual violence so publicly and in a collective way had also evoked a great deal of the personal for them, reminding us that 'the personal is also political'. This is obvious in a collection of personal narratives the young women produced in 2016 entitled, *14 Times a Woman: Indigenous Stories from the Heart.*

But far from this being a project simply of cultural production, what has been critical has been the participants' work in 'engaging' policy makers on campus. What does it mean to take up sexual violence not just as a set of arts-based activities carried out as part of a series of workshops, but to actually engage with the issues directly with people who could change policies and practices? What have been the responses of those approached and how do the young women position themselves in this work? Unlike the work of Marks (2001) and Trigg (2010) which looked at youth activism in a retrospective way, this study is still very much on-going. This means that while it is not possible to study the impact of this work on the individuals and the community as a whole since it is still underway, it has been possible to observe the work 'up close' and in action.

The Participants

The 14 young women came from rural areas of the Eastern Cape to attend university in the biggest city in the province. All were just out of school and were enrolled for an undergraduate teaching degree at university. We posted an invitation on the first year education student email list, targeting young women who were from rural areas, to participate in our project. The first student who made herself available talked to other students she knew who came from rural areas as they were taking the same intercity bus to Port Elizabeth. Our sampling strategy was therefore a snowball one.

Our own positioning in the fieldwork is important as a way to frame the types of campus activities. Although we have engaged in participatory visual research in many different settings in South Africa, this study probably comes closest to representing something of an insider stance based on our work as women in the academy. At the same time, the study reflects key themes in much of the research on sexual violence we have carried out together in

rural settings. (De Lange, Mitchell and Bhana 2012; Moletsane, Mitchell and Lewin 2015). Drawing on this work in rural contexts we already knew about many of the challenges that young women often face just to graduate from high school and get accepted into university. In some of the settings where we have worked, it has been difficult to reach policy makers, perhaps because we ourselves have had to figure out who the appropriate policy makers might be at the district, provincial or national levels in education. But we have been working in university settings for decades and we saw that we could bring to bear some of our insider knowledge of what "from-the-ground-up" or grass-roots policy-making might comprise.

The Process

We wanted to explore with the young women what sexual violence on campus looked like from their vantage point as first-year women students, but also recognized from our own previous research and the work of others the importance of producing locally relevant visual and concrete artefacts (cellphilms, policy posters and action briefs) which could be used in dialogue with policy makers on campus (see Figure 19.1).

In the first session we introduced the purpose of the project, spent some time contextualizing the work, and then engaged the young women in a participatory video process (see also Mitchell and De Lange 2011) in relation to the prompt of "'feeling safe' and 'feeling not so safe' in and around the university as a female student". The process included brainstorming the issues, deciding which examples were most urgent, and developing a storyboard to produce cellphilms.[1] Working in groups of three or four, each group produced a short 2 to 3 minute cellphilm using the cellphones from the collection in our research equipment. While the issues they identified covered a range of concerns, the four cellphilms that were created focused on the following themes: their not
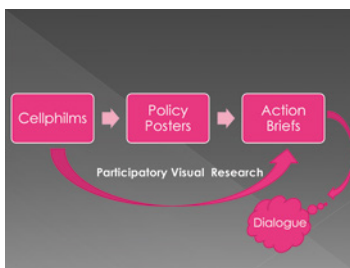
FIGURE 19.1
The participatory research process
IMAGE: CLAUDIA MITCHELL, NAYDENE DE LANGE, RELEBOHILE MOLETSANE

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1   Dockney and Tomaselli (2009) write at length about the idea of cellphilms or videos made with a cellphone.
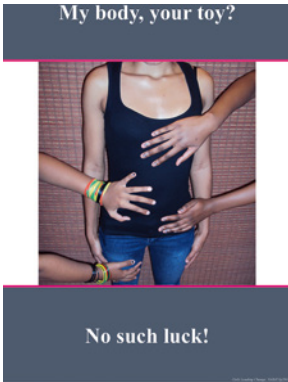
FIGURE 19.2
An example of a policy poster raising the issue of harassment
IMAGE: NAYDENE DE LANGE

being safe because of inefficient security in residence; having as young women to negotiate a place in residence with an off-campus residence manager; vulnerability during sport matches held on campus when some spectators overstep boundaries and pose a threat to their safety; and male students harassing the young women when they cross the square in front of the male student residence. After viewing and discussing the cellphilms, they added several other issues: date rape and sexual harassment by other groups of on-campus staff. In a subsequent session they transformed the themes of their cellphilms into policy posters (see Figure 19.2, for an example of a policy poster), which could strengthen the message of the cellphilm. In the end the girls created six policy posters, each made up of a visual (a photograph they took to depict the issue or a drawing they made) and a carefully constructed and powerful message. In a later session, they re-represented their ideas about the issues as 'action briefs' as a specific genre for taking action. Creating the action briefs involved working with a template of first offering a brief situational analysis, then articulating the problem as they saw it and, finally, suggesting solutions for addressing the issue. The solutions in the six action briefs (see Figure 19.3, for an example) focused on what they themselves could do, but also what they expected others (e.g. policy makers) to do. Using participatory visual work in this way enabled the findings to be immediately available to the girls and young

FIGURE 19.3
An example of an action brief
IMAGE: NAYDENE DE LANGE

women as central to the dissemination process. (See also De Lange, Mitchell and Moletsane 2015; De Lange, Moletsane and Mitchell 2015).

The Dialogues

The visual artefacts provided a powerful portfolio of work the young women could draw on when communicating their ideas on addressing sexual violence to university policy makers. As noted above, using our own knowledge as women academics of the structures of the institution, we considered the importance of taking up the dialogue with small groups of policy makers, and planned the presentations with the project team members first introducing the project and the young women each presenting an aspect of the work, concluding with open ended discussion. The first meeting, which was an hour long, was set up with the Dean of the Education faculty and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Engagement, who knew about our work and with whom we could test out our communication process in initiating dialogue. The dialogue was gentle and created a space for the 14 young women to express views on sexual violence to an audience of policy makers. The audience showed appreciation for the work and indicated that they would take it up in other fora of the university. Part of the conclusion of the dialogue was to officially hand over a portfolio of the artefacts to the policy makers, to visually document the event by taking a group photograph, and to ask who else we should be talking to, creating a type of snowball process. Each of these components served as clear steps in terms of strategy: leaving a trace, visual documentation, and 'what next?'

With a smaller group of six young women the second dialogue was with the Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD), a centre which promotes gender equality. The discussion was rich and interesting, and opened up opportunities for disseminating the work to a wider audience during the annual Diversity Month which was to be held later in the year. Here too, the portfolio of artefacts was officially handed over, a photograph taken to document the event, and a discussion about further people with whom to share our work was held. At the end of this successful dialogue we were encouraged to set up a dialogue with the Director of Institutional Planning and the Director of Transformation, Monitoring and Evaluation. In this third dialogue it was pointed out that the university has a sexual harassment policy, yet it was clear in the discussions that the young women, as first year students, were not aware of what the policy could do for them. This showed the disjuncture between policy and practice, particularly so if it is a policy made in a top-down way. The young women, on the other hand, had specific ideas about what policy should look like, and the ways in which the development and implementation of policy should be 'from the ground-up' and led by them.

The fourth dialogue was with four high ranking officials: the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Institutional Support, the Dean of Students, the Residence Manager and the Head of Protection Services, with each suggesting how they could draw on the girls and their expertise in addressing sexual violence on campus. One, for example, indicated how the girls might comprise 'safety ambassadors' on campus; another, how they might be involved in the orientation programme of the new intake of first-year students. Another invited the girls to make the same presentation in one of the residences and dialogue with student leaders. This official also requested sets of policy posters which could be displayed in the residences. Another indicated that he had been unaware of the issues the girls raised and that his eyes had been opened. The Deputy Vice Chancellor for Institutional Support acknowledged the important work the young women were doing and congratulated them on taking up the series of dialogues which were typically scheduled for an hour, but this time extended past the hour; during this time they were deeply engaged in discussion with the university leaders, speaking animatedly about their work and how it had changed their lives. Here we noted how their approach had changed, as they confidently responded to the questions, demonstrating their understanding of sexual violence and what needed to be changed.

The dialogues have continued, and have included engagement with several other university leaders at another campus 330 km away. With each it has been possible to note how the young women spoke more powerfully to the issues at hand. Their presentations and dialogues saw them invited to speak at a Feminist Dialogue event sponsored by *Agenda*,[2] give a presentation during Diversity Month celebrations, participate in a panel at a Humanising Pedagogy week and address the audience at a stopping gender violence event organized by the 'Kwanele! Enuf is Enuf!' initiative. In the Humanising Pedagogy week they also included a photovoice activity in which they elicited other students' views on how to stop sexual violence. In another event some of them participated in the initiation of a university gender forum. Each of these dialogues offers supporting evidence on how their voices have been acknowledged as important to be heard in addressing sexual violence in higher education institutions. Zethu, one of the young women leading change who was sitting next to Naydene during a dialogue event, whispered that it felt so good that we, the researchers, did not answer on their behalf, and that she felt that they had responded well to the questions posed. It seemed that indeed the girls were leading the policy change they want to see.

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2   Their presentation 'Girls leading change in addressing sexual violence at a South African University' was part of an Agenda Feminist Dialogue 'Transforming violent culture and building platforms for young women' which took place in Durban in June 2014.

Discussion

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to identify the overall impact that this initiative has had on the young women and whether they see themselves as gender activists, we are nonetheless able to offer several observations and key questions. The first is that this work needs to be strategic. Perhaps this is just our own take on years of experience working in higher education institutions, but it was, in our view, something within the realm of political education that was worth passing on to the girls and young women, especially in the context of the question, 'who needs to know?' A second point is that this work is not always popular. Inevitably there can be the perception that this work is 'stepping on toes' in relation to the structures that already exist. This is something that is being taken up on many university campuses in the UK, Canada and the US and not just in South Africa. Universities are realizing that even though they may have sexual harassment policies, the actual implementation / enforcement of these policies is not clearly delineated. The 'in the making' of this activism then was to make sure that there were opportunities to debrief, where possible, after the sessions so that that girls had a chance to both respond to and learn from the events as another type of political education. At the same time, we return to the work of Taft (2010) and an observation she makes that most of the work on young women and activism involves participants who are at university level or older, and rarely addresses activism in high school settings. Given the insidious nature of sexual violence in South African schools, the involvement of girls and young women 'looking back' as has been the case in Girls Leading Change, and with the potential for working alongside girls in school may be a particularly productive (and safe) approach. Finally, we want to return to the issue of our own positionality as adult women and the potential for intergenerationality in this work. The emergence of what the South African feminist journal *Agenda* refers to as an African Feminisms discourse suggests a space for work in this area, although to date there has been little written about the role of feminist researchers in the emerging political landscape of girl-centred activism in relation to addressing sexual violence in South Africa.[3] Who can be allies in this work? To what extent do issues of race, language or geography continue to be reproduced or are there ways that initiatives in a new climate of activism can challenge colonialism? What is the role for other players and actors such as women researchers, teachers or mothers? Of course, as Ratele (2016) argues, further questions about the role of boys and

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3 A promising direction in this regard was seen in the Forum at the AWID conference held in Cape Town in 2008, "Young feminist activism and intergenerationality".

men, as well as those involved in their socialization in the fight against sexual violence, need to be further addressed. In his book, *Liberating Masculinities*, Ratele (ibid.) argues that masculinities, which often produce violence against women, are culturally constructed. For him, this presents opportunities for not only liberating boys and men from violent forms of masculinities, but those who are involved in the social construction of such masculinities as well.

Conclusions and Implications

Clearly the issue of the activism of girls and young women in addressing an issue that is both personal and social / collective in a contemporary South African context is far from simple. While the concerns are constantly 'in the public' as can be seen in everything from the Jacob Zuma trial of 2005 to the Oscar Pistorius trial of 2014, it is not clear how the issues can be taken up only through public protest by girls and young women. Other activist platforms are needed. On the one hand, these are issues of sexual and reproductive health rights which run far deeper than protesting the treatment of public figures, and have a great deal to do with access to safe abortions, contraception, HIV testing, and prophylactics, as well as the opportunity to continue schooling in the context of teen pregnancy. These are rights that are often contested in local contexts (see Moletsane, Mitchell and Lewin 2015). The vast number of studies that highlight sexual violence in and around schools, male teachers abusing their power, gang rape and so on, should incite girls and women as well as boys and men to engage in political protest. In raising such concerns we are left with a number of questions. What kind of support is required to develop and sustain an activist agenda amongst girls and young women in relation to sexual violence and other sexual and reproductive health issues? It should not be something that girls and young women have to do on their own, and the issue of allies, as noted above, is critical. What are some of the cautionary notes we should pay attention to as researchers? We have focused on collective action in Girls Leading Change, with the idea that group members are also able to provide support for each other and, in so doing, potentially subvert individualistic 'empowerment' approaches. This in and of itself is also a strategy – part of the political education referred to by Taft (2010) and reminiscent, perhaps, of gender activism in the popular education movement in South Africa and elsewhere in the 1990s (see for example Walters 1996; Von Kotze 1996), albeit as adult-focused as opposed to youth-focused. At the same time we might also ask if we risk doing 'most harm and least good' in our efforts to support an activist agenda for girls and young women. Girls Leading Change has been very

much an 'on the ground' campaign. However, as noted above, media spaces, in spite of their potential for cyber-violence, may still represent safer spaces, and ultimately having even broader reach in the context of social media. The lessons learned from the use of social media in the so-called Arab Spring to spark a revolution should not be lost when it comes to the lives of girls and young women. A decade ago Honwana and De Boeck's (2005) collection *Makers & Breakers: Children & Youth in Postcolonial Africa* omits for the most part sexual violence as a political and activist issue for youth. Clearly there is more work needed in this area of 'gender activism in the making' as a long term strategy for transforming violent cultures.

Acknowledgements

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