

## Editorial

The dossier of this issue of *Afrika Focus* presents some of the papers that were presented during last year's symposium of the Ghent Africa Platform (GAP). The theme of GAPSVM2 was 'Mobilities in Africa, Africa in Mobility' and it had a double goal. 'Mobilities in Africa' tried to explore different kinds of mobility which in their turn could be linked to specific spaces that are created through such mobilities. Conversely, 'Africa in mobility' wanted to examine the place of 'Africa' in theories or analytical models currently in use for the investigation of mobility. Each in their own way all four of the papers deal with one or both of these concerns and the diversity of articles published here illustrates well the range of subjects which GAPSVM2 addressed.

In his wide-ranging article William Reno could be said to look into some form of political mobility – the power of movements to gain 'glocal' leverage in order to survive or even overcome their adversaries. According to Reno, one of the prominent spaces in cold-war political mobility was the university campus – a site of elite networking and ideological training. During the last decades, the campus has been replaced by more dispersed social spaces from where political-military entrepreneurs launch their interventions. Basically, Reno asks why ideologically-driven insurgencies are disappearing in Africa and thus touches upon the end-of-ideology debate which has been raging widely since Fukuyama's 1989 essay 'The End of History'. Although Reno does not explicitly approve of Fukuyama's point about the end of ideologies worldwide, when in his conclusion he presages the return of 'major armed movements' in Africa, he innocuously endorses Fukuyama (1989) who states that "the vast bulk of the Third World remains very much mired in history, and will be a terrain of conflict for many years to come".

While never losing the social and even cultural aspects out of sight, Gordon Pirie examines different kinds of physical or geographical mobility in connection to a multitude of scales ranging from the local to the international. Whether punning on the acronym of the host institution of the symposium or not, Pirie is mainly concerned with a number of gaps: the mobility and infrastructure gaps as well as the 'rights gap'. In connection with the latter concept, Pirie asks a number of stinging questions about the redistribution of mobility, and to what an extent it can be made into some form of human right. These questions, surely, matter as much to Africans as to Europeans and others. The current debate in Belgium on 'basic mobility rights' (*basismobiliteit/mobilité de base*) is a case in point.

Finally, both Gewalt and Gradé discuss forms of discursive mobility, albeit of a very different nature. Gewalt examines rumours targeting the white and black sections of the population in late colonial Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). According to Africans, whites were increasingly involved in witchcraft practices while among the white settlers rumours abounded about impending Mau-Mau-like terrorism. When concluding that these mutual rumouring may have had a considerable impact on major political developments, even as radical as the independence of Zambia, Gewalt invites us to scrutinize how rumours are preceding, legitimizing or simply rationalizing conflicts of different sorts in contemporary Africa and elsewhere.

The kind of discursive mobility Jeanne Gradé *et al.* are seeking to map is the circulation (or absence thereof) of 'ethnoveterinary knowledge' in local and regional arenas among the Karamojong of the north-eastern part of Uganda. There, Gradé *et al.* identify the importance and real impact of traditional livestock healers' associations with which Gradé herself has been working since the late 1990s. The more general point Gradé is making that information does not 'sit in places', it exists – is activated, adapted, and revitalised – in mobility. In other words non-mobile knowledge is 'dead' – ends to be knowledge *tout court*.

If the reader will find that GAP's mobility symposium has produced some exciting ideas and research avenues, GAP is already preparing this year's conference on 'Gendering research in/on Africa' – or how to enhance the gender dimensions of research in and on Africa. GAPS<sub>3</sub> will have the University of Nairobi as its guest institution and has asked the UGent Faculty of Medicine to find an appropriate speaker for the Annual Distinguished Lecture on Africa. Afrika Focus is thus looking forward to an exciting special issue on gender (23/2) in 2010.

One final event which will determine not so much the immediate but the long-term future of Afrika Focus is that GAP has joined AEGIS, the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies, at the occasion of its biennial conference (ECAS<sub>3</sub>) at Leipzig in early June. This opens interesting new opportunities for Afrika Focus. In the near future the AEGIS Working Group on Academic Output will add Afrika Focus to its list of professional journals. There it will be listed as double-blind refereed, the second highest ranking, after 'journals on the ISI list'. We may inform you that Afrika Focus is presently doing everything it can in order to find its place on the ISI Web of Science, but it can take several years still to reach that goal. Equally important is that Afrika Focus is considering joining an AEGIS initiative to organise writing workshops for junior researchers (from Africa). In these workshops several journals present their priorities and the publication process in general, after which participants have the opportunity to present pre-circulated papers to a journal editor and small audience, and work through comments and possible improvements. By joining this initiative, Afrika Focus is formalising a long-standing commitment, which it has had for many years, to help junior scholars preparing their articles for publication. The other editors and myself know how time-consuming this commitment has been but it is part of a larger strategy of Afrika Focus to narrow the publication gap between Europe and Africa. Other elements of this strategy are the fact that Afrika Focus is an Open Access journal, and offers the possibility of gift subscriptions. May I take this opportunity to invite our readers to take such a guest subscription in favour of one of the many libraries in Africa where there is neither money to buy journals nor sufficient internet access to download and print online Afrika Focus articles. In this way many others may enjoy this issue of Afrika Focus as much as you do.

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