

Thomas Bierschenk and
Eva Spies

Africa since 1960
Continuities, Dislocations,
Perspectives

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Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität,

Forum 6, D-55099 Mainz, Germany.

Tel. +49-6131-3923720; Email: ifeas@uni-mainz.de; <http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de>

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Abstract

Many African states south of the Sahara celebrated half a century of political independence around the year 2010. This paper, originally written in German as introduction to an edited topical volume (Bierschenk and Spies 2012), evaluates this 50-year period and presents perspectives on the future challenges facing these states. It summarizes the developments of the past 50 years in areas such as the economy, religion, cultural production and politics. As a result of various multi-layered processes of consolidation, differentiation and transformation, African societies today are significantly more complex and diverse than they were at the time of independence. Moreover, African actors are far more visible at global level today than they were 50 years ago. Nevertheless, the validity of 1960 as a milestone in the periodization of 20th century African history proves limited: the importance of formal independence pales into insignificance in the light of the continuing influence of the colonial period and the 'African Spring', that is the processes of liberalization and democratization that emerged in around 1990. The structures of the rentier economies established in the colonial period have remained astonishingly stable in most African countries to the present day. This stability contrasts conspicuously with the societal dynamics displayed by contemporary African societies and is increasingly at odds with the wide-ranging attempts of these societies to dissociate themselves from the definitions of development and political models defined by the Global North and their own elites. This striving for "discursive sovereignty" is particularly evident in many areas of cultural production.

Zusammenfassung

Um das Jahr 2010 haben viele Staaten Afrikas südlich der Sahara ein halbes Jahrhundert politischer Unabhängigkeit gefeiert. Dieser Text zieht eine Bilanz dieser fünfzig Jahre und formuliert Perspektiven auf zukünftige Herausforderungen. Ursprünglich auf Deutsch als Einleitung zu einem einschlägigen Sammelband geschrieben (Bierschenk und Spies 2012), gibt er eine Zusammenschau der Entwicklungen der letzten fünfzig Jahre in Bereichen wie Ökonomie, Religion, Kulturproduktion oder Politik. Dabei wird deutlich, dass vielschichtige Verdichtungs-, Differenzierungs- und Transformationsprozesse dazu geführt haben, dass afrikanische Gesellschaften heute bedeutend komplexer und diverser sind als zu der Zeit, als die Staaten politisch unabhängig wurden und dass afrikanische Akteure heute global deutlich sichtbarer sind als vor 50 Jahren. Dennoch erweist sich das Gewicht des Jahres 1960 für eine sinnvolle Periodisierung der afrikanischen Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts als begrenzt: Die Bedeutung der formalen Unabhängigkeit verblasst hinter dem fortdauernden Gewicht der Kolonialzeit und dem „afrikanischen Frühling“, also den Liberalisierungs- und Demokratisierungsprozessen der Jahre um 1990. In den meisten Ländern Afrikas sind die in der Kolonialzeit verankerten Strukturen kolonialer Rentenökonomien bis heute erstaunlich stabil geblieben. Diese Stabilität kontrastiert allerdings auffällig mit den gesellschaftlichen Dynamiken, die zeitgenössische afrikanische Gesellschaften auszeichnen und gerät in zunehmenden Widerspruch zu den vielfältigen Versuchen, sich von

Entwicklungsdefinitionen und politischen Modellen des Globalen Nordens und der eigenen Eliten zu lösen. Dieses Streben nach „diskursiver Souveränität“ zeigt sich insbesondere in vielen Bereichen der Kulturproduktion.

The authors:

Thomas Bierschenk is Professor for Modern African Studies at the Department of Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz.

Eva Spies is Professor for the Study of Religion with special focus on Africa at the University of Bayreuth.

E-Mail: biersche@uni-mainz.de; Eva.Spies@uni-bayreuth.de



AFRICA SINCE 1960 CONTINUITIES, DISLOCATIONS, PERSPECTIVES

Thomas Bierschenk and Eva Spies

“Our country is an *abiku* country. Like the spirit-child, it keeps coming and going. One day it will decide to remain. It will become strong.” (Ben Okri 1991)¹

Many African states south of the Sahara celebrated half a century of political independence in 2010: thirty former colonies became independent in the five-year period from 1957 to 1962. In 1960, around half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa lived in 17 of these countries. In many places, particularly in Africa itself but also in Europe and Germany, this 50th anniversary presented scientists and politicians with a reason to take stock. This paper also represents an attempt to reconsider the last 50 years. It traces the political, cultural, economic and social changes and continuities of the societies in question, and thus explores the significance of the year 1960 for African history. The paper concludes with thoughts on the prospects and challenges facing African countries based on this retrospective account and contemporary developments.²

The African continent has changed profoundly since 1960. However, our view of Africa often fails to do justice to the complexity of this development. No other continent prompts such sweeping generalizations as Africa. Imagine if major German newspapers had an ‘Asia correspondent’ who reported on Iraq from Singapore. Yet, this is precisely the situation that prevails in the media reporting on Africa. Correspondents are usually responsible for almost 25 countries, some of which are located further away from them than their media bases in Hamburg (Mükke 2009). The situation in relation to the scientific literature is not necessarily better: here too we frequently encounter generalizations which, on closer scrutiny, prove to be extrapolations about the entire continent based on the specific empirical situation in one country (Keller 1991). Two topics dominate in many of these representations of Africa, that is democracy and economic development or their absence, that is dictatorship, failed states, civil war, terrorism, poverty and hunger. Given that the average daily income in Africa today is still less than two US dollars, Africa is the continent with the highest relative number of people living in poverty. Nonetheless, average living conditions on the continent have improved since 1960. Life expectancy at birth has risen from 41 to 54 years and child mortality among children under five has fallen by almost 60 percent. One area in which Africa has

¹ On the Yorùbá concept of the *abiku*, cf. Oed 2012.

² This paper is the translated and slightly amended introduction (Bierschenk and Spies 2012b) to a topical volume of essays published by the authors in German in 2012 (Bierschenk and Spies 2012a; see also Bierschenk and Spies 2010). The book originated in the biennial conference of the Vereinigung für Afrikawissenschaften in Deutschland, VAD (African Studies Association in Germany), which took place at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz in April 2010. On the VAD and the conference, see: <http://www.vad-ev.de/index.php?id=12&L=1>. Apart from the three keynotes, which were given by African scholars (Lopes 2010, 2012; Nganang 2012; Nugent 2010, 2012), we solicited contributions exclusively from German-speaking authors, not all of them participants at the Mainz conference. In this sense, along with this paper, the book is also a commentary on the current state of African studies in Germany (see also Probst 2005). Due to the complexity and diversity of societal developments, we had to omit several important topics. This does not imply that issues such as sport, social classes, traditional religion or higher education are of lesser importance, but dealing with them here would go beyond the scope of this paper. We would like to thank Susan Cox for translation and Sarah Krause for the editing of this text.

caught up is that of primary school enrolment rates: these doubled in the 1960s and '70s, collapsed in the 1980s due to the economic crisis, and have risen again significantly since then (Bierschenk 2012a).³ However, in terms of percentages, the improvements have been weaker than in the rest of the world. An enormous gap has emerged at economic level in particular: while per-capita income in Africa grew by around 50 percent between 1960 and 2010, average per-capita incomes at global level increased by almost three times that rate over the same period. What is easily forgotten, however, is that although Africa remains the poorhouse of the world overall, only a small minority of its population live in dictatorships or 'collapsing' states.

This focus on economic and political conditions tends to divert attention from just how profoundly the continent has changed over the last 50 years: not just on a political and economic level but also, and perhaps primarily, on a social and cultural level. Multi-layered processes of densification, differentiation and transformation have resulted in African societies being significantly more complex and diverse today than they were when the states gained their political independence. The predominant trend here does not involve a development from 'tradition' to 'modernity' (irrespective of how these terms might be defined), but, first and foremost, increasing diversification and pluralization on all levels, i.e. economic, social, political, religious and cultural. This diverse and multi-faceted African present can also be read as an indicator of a possible – diversifying and pluralizing – European future. The second trend lies in the far greater global visibility of societal processes and cultural production in Africa (compared to the period around 1960) and the far greater presence of African actors on the global arena.

Thus our attempt to review some of the political, economic and social dynamics in the Africa of the last 50 years does not merely embody an evaluative look back at the continent's post-colonial history, which remains poorly researched as a whole. By identifying changes, continuities and, particularly, differentiation processes under way in different areas, we also want to draw attention to the pressures, challenges and opportunities facing Africa in the future.

The subject of the book on which this paper is based, are the 48 countries of sub-Saharan Africa that exist today.⁴ Although the propensity for hasty generalization relating to the entire continent when writing about 'Africa' is fundamentally problematic, the risk is less acute in a book written by 26 authors who provide very different regional perspectives and expertise. A comparison of the different contributions enables the cautious identification of some general trends and this is one of the tasks of this paper.

Moreover, there are substantial arguments in favour of treating sub-Saharan Africa as a (relative) unit. Two positions on this question have been formulated in the scientific litera-

3 Calculated from World Bank data, see interactive website: <http://databank.worldbank.org/>.

4 'Sub-Saharan Africa' is abbreviated to 'Africa' in the remainder of this text. Thus countries like Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania and Tunisia are not included in the analysis. The 48 sub-Saharan countries also include the island states of the Seychelles and Mauritius. To these are added two cases which are the subject of political dispute: The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic is recognized by the African Union but annexed *de facto* by Morocco, and the Republic of Somaliland is independent *de facto*, however it is not internationally recognized. In 1960, 17 states in sub-Saharan Africa become independent: the former French territories, that is the current states of Benin (formerly Dahomey), Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Chad, the Central African Republic and Nigeria (former British colony), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Belgian colony) and Somalia (a union of former British and Italian colonies). Sudan had already gained independence in 1956, Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) in 1957, and Guinea-Conakry in 1958.

ture. The first, of which several variants exist (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1969; Goody 1971, 1973; Kopytoff 1987), relates to the relative uniformity of social processes in pre-colonial Africa south of the Sahara. It is argued here that the continent's relatively sparse population led to the practice of a predominantly extensive form of agriculture and made Africans into "frontier pioneers" (Iliffe 2003), who had a wide variety of exit options open to them in terms of claims to power. Accordingly, like political power, economic success had less to do with the control of the means of production than the direct control of people. As a result, a more deep-rooted form of class formation did not emerge, and only limited forms of central statehood and bureaucratic rule arose. In particular, the development of a culture of writing was merely sporadic.

The second position identifies African unity not in uniform internal social processes, but in Africa's position in world history since the early modern period: sub-Saharan Africa first became a uniform (or unified) object of world history with the transatlantic slave trade and then with colonialism (Mudimbe 1988, 1994). Thus 'Africa' (like the 'Orient', cf. Said 1978) was created from an external perspective: i.e. Europe aimed to ensure its own uniqueness through the construction of a "completely different" Africa (Hegel 1986 [1840]: *Einleitung*, III b.2). However, Africans actively co-operated in the creation of this representation of a uniform Africa. In particular, intellectuals like Edward W. Blyden, W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, who developed the idea of pan-Africanism from the late nineteenth century (initially within the American diaspora), Aimé Césaire, and Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first President of Senegal, who founded the Negritude movement. These movements had a formative influence on other political leaders of the independence movements (Macamo 1999). A survey carried out by the BBC in 2004, according to which the vast majority of respondents saw themselves not only as belonging to their own countries but were also proud to be 'Africans' (BBC World Service 2004), shows that these 'constructions' are effective in their own way.

The two positions – i.e. 'Africa' as the product of comparable societal processes and sum of cultural similarities and Africa as a construct, generated by an external perspective – are obviously not mutually exclusive. Following the aforementioned authors, we adopt the position that, despite all the differences in detail between the political practices of the major colonial powers, i.e. Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and Portugal, the relative uniformity of post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa also originates in a relative uniformity of the colonial regime (Mamdani 1996; Spittler 1981; Trotha 1994; Young 1994). The key characteristics of this colonial regime were the exploitation of human labour and natural resources in the colonial economies, which can be described as rentier economies, and the patrimonial and repressive character of the colonial rule. These characteristic features of the political economy of colonial sub-Saharan Africa were perpetuated after 1960: the vast majority of Africa's states remained rentier states – a new source of rent had arisen in the form of development aid from the end of the Second World War. We will return to the concepts referred to here, i.e. rentier economy and rentier state, colonial economy, patrimonialism.

The paper pursues the following key question: At what levels and in which areas are we more likely to observe continuities in Africa's historical development, and where can we pinpoint historical ruptures and transformations? In other words, we attempt to periodize the last half century. Obviously, these periodizations can only be based on a particular perspective and are relative in nature. They are based on ideas – of external observers but also participating actors – about the relative weight of historical factors, which, in turn, can develop at different historical speeds (Braudel 1977). Different scientists and different actors may identify different transitions between periods and interpret them as 'continuities' or

'ruptures'. By way of objection to a proposed periodization, reference may also be made to counterexamples. If history is not to be limited to the monotonous description of the succession of events, historical narratives like those collected in Bierschenk and Spies (2012), and summarized in this paper, must be divided into time periods. It is also essential, of course, to disclose the criteria adopted in these periodizations and the actors to which they apply.

Paradoxically, in view of the title and the occasion for this paper, it will become apparent – and this is our first thesis – that the significance of the year 1960 tends to be limited in relation to the meaningful periodization of twentieth century African history. Its significance is already limited by the fact that only part of Africa gained political independence around 1960. Independence still had to be fought for in bloody wars in the Portuguese colonies and in southern Africa, a process that only concluded with the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994. However, in the states that became politically independent in 1960, the focus on 1960 that was so prominent in the official commemorations held in 2010 tends to reflect the perspectives of the European governments and African political elites, whose predecessors had come to power in 1960 and whose interests lay in constructing an unbroken line of continuity from 1960 to 2010.

Yet the importance of the *flag independence* (Nugent 2004: 8) pales into insignificance in the face of the continuing weight of the colonial period, the consequences of the particular form of decolonization on the further development of many African countries, and the liberalization and democratization processes of the period around 1990. The stage for the so-called African Spring was set with the Round Table in Benin in 1989/90 and it reached an initial conclusion with the end of apartheid in 1994. This was not exclusively a political event in the strict sense: different but connected social, political, religious and cultural developments converged in it. Moreover, in contrast to 1960, the years around 1990 represented not only an important date for Africa but also at global level.

The democratization and liberalization processes of the late 1980s and early 1990s gave rise to few changes in terms of the deep economic structures in most African countries. They may have created the preconditions for the (also economic) comeback of South Africa, the only industrialized economy south of the Sahara, which was a necessary but clearly insufficient precondition for the future economic development of the rest of the continent. However, outside of South Africa, the structures of the rentier economies, which are rooted in the colonial period, have remained astonishingly stable to the present day. This stability contrasts conspicuously with the societal dynamics that characterize contemporary African societies and is increasingly at odds with the drive for discursive autonomy (Nganang 2012), which can be observed in many areas of cultural production. Hence our second thesis is that political and economic developments are less likely to offer Africa the possibility of achieving positive changes than societal and cultural trends. The challenge lies in finding ways of using these opportunities productively (also in the economic sense).

In the following we begin by providing a brief presentation of the (mainly German) research on Africa since 1960. This is followed by a closer look at developments in particular areas. First, we address some of the major trends in the post-colonial history of Africa: i.e. demographic developments, migratory movements, urbanization, educational expansion, the transformation of religion and the change in kinship relationship patterns. Second, we look at nations and nationalisms. Third, we summarize the dynamics in the areas of economics and politics under the general heading of political economy, as it is difficult to draw a definitive dividing line between the two. Fourth, we deal with change in the media, literature, film and music, i.e. areas in which the perhaps most rapid developments of the last 50

years arose. In the final section, we address the question of periodization again and explain why the period around 1990 rather than that around 1960 is particularly significant for the history of the last half century in Africa. The paper concludes with a look to the future and the challenges facing African countries.

Social science research on Africa since 1960

Today, Africa is no longer the exclusive preserve of anthropologists and linguists and is also a focus of interest for political scientists, historians, sociologists, and Islamic studies and literature scholars. Accordingly, this paper not only deals with central historical developments in Africa since 1960 (or parts thereof, at least), it also reflects the development of German-language research on Africa over the last 50 years.

In a way, 1960 (and the preceding years) can be described as the birth of modern multidisciplinary Africa research. Up to then, Africa was almost exclusively the subject of research by anthropologists, geographers and some linguists, and based on an evolutionary paradigm (Probst 2005). In the scientific division of labour that formed in the nineteenth century, at the high point of capitalist imperialism, the major social sciences like sociology, economics and history became responsible for studying social dynamics in the metropolises and anthropology was considered a specialist discipline for the peripheries (Wolf 1986: 23-40). However, in Great Britain, at least, anthropology gradually opened up to the modern world in its topics from the late 1930s. The research carried out by the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, which was established in Lusaka in today's Zambia in 1938, and the Manchester School of Social Anthropology involving Max Gluckman, Victor Turner and others was expressly focused on not only rural, 'traditional' and 'tribal' Africa, but also on urban processes. While linguists had long been involved in the teaching of African languages on behalf of the colonial services (for example at the Seminar for Oriental Languages in Berlin), it was during this period of the gradual scientification of colonial policy that the figure of the anthropologist as an expert in 'local knowledge' in the context of planned development processes emerged simultaneous to other experts, for example in the areas of health, livestock and demography. Similar perspectives to those developed by the Manchester School were adopted in France by George Balandier, around whom a Marxist anthropology developed in the 1960s. In contrast, it was not until the early 1980s that German Africanist anthropology took its first steps towards research on the modern world.

The unfolding independence of the African colonies generated a need for facts about politics, economics and demography, which the slowly modernizing discipline of anthropology was initially unable to fulfil. The young discipline of political science stepped into the breach here, particularly in the USA, and formed the separate sub-discipline of comparative politics. Under the leading paradigm of modernization theory, David Apter and others studied the political culture (*civic culture*) of the "young nation states" (Fricke 2012). These modernization theory approaches were an initial source of inspiration for the new political elites and also guided the 'good advice' provided by the international consultants. However, in the quest for 'their' culture and identity, African intellectuals like those involved in the Negritude movement also referred to the studies of Africa researchers like Leo Frobenius.

While German anthropological research on Africa of that time concentrated on micro-studies, often of supposedly 'traditional' phenomena, the political sciences and sociology focused on macro trends and the 'big' questions of development and modernization: in

Germany, the first chair of modern political-scientific Africa research was established at the Freie Universität Berlin in 1967 and occupied by the historian Franz Ansprenger. In 1974, a chair for the Sociology of Africa was established at Mainz University, and occupied by Gerhard Grohs (Bierschenk 2016). In 1986, a similar chair was established in Bayreuth (and occupied by Josef Gugler until 1991). A special sub-discipline for the study of the 'developing countries' also gradually emerged in sociology in 1960, i.e. the sociology of development. The first corresponding chairs in the German-speaking world were established in Münster (Karl Heinz Pfeffer), Bern (Paul Trappe) and Bielefeld (Hans-Dieter Evers). Although this involved an opening up of the 'general' social sciences to the peripheries, to the present day, the research on Africa is mostly reserved to a special 'regional science' branch of these general social sciences, and is poorly integrated into the relevant main disciplines. Another factor that contributed to this division was that modern Africa research in (West) Germany was initially undertaken for the most part outside of the universities, for example at the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute in Freiburg, established in 1960, and the German Institute for African Studies in Hamburg, which was established in 1963 in the context of the German Übersee-Institut.⁵ The establishment of the African Studies Association (then the Vereinigung von Afrikanisten in Deutschland, VAD) in 1969 represented an attempt by linguists and sociologists to assemble a wide range of disciplines focusing on Africa under the general heading of 'African Studies'. However, a division arose again between the linguists and more social-science-oriented Africa researchers as early as 1978. At international level, numerous African studies institutes and associations were established around 1960 which were dedicated to researching precolonial and colonial Africa and, above all, cultural, social, political and economic transformation processes in post-colonial Africa.⁶

Thus, Africa research in the years before and after 1960 was primarily an activity of the global North and African researchers were involved as (often unnamed) assistants, at best. This was related to the fact that, within sub-Saharan Africa, universities in the strict sense (that is full institutions with the right to award doctorates) only existed in South Africa where they were reserved for the white population.

With the establishment of full African universities, the institutional competence for scientific self-observation in Africa increased significantly from 1960. History, in particular, was

5 The Institute for Africa Studies or Institute for African Affairs (IAA) became one of the regional institutes of the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in 2007.

6 For example: the US American African Studies Association (ASA) in 1957 and the African Studies Association UK (ASAUUK) in 1963. M. Herskovits had established the Program of African Studies (PAS) at Northwestern University as far back as 1948; the African Studies Program at the University of Boston was created in 1953, the African Studies Center (ASC) at the University of California in 1959 and the African Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin in 1961. In France, the Centre d'étude d'Afrique noire (CEAN) was founded in 1958 and the Centre d'études et de recherches sur les pays d'Afrique orientale (CREPAO) in 1977 – the merger of these two institutes gave rise to the Les Afriques dans le monde (LAM) research centre in 2011; the Centre d'Etudes Africaines (CEAF) in Paris was founded in 1958 and was funded by the École des hautes études en sciences sociales, EHESS and the ORSTOM. The latter was established in 1943 as the Office de la recherche scientifique coloniale/ORSC and later renamed Office de la recherche scientifique et technique outre-mer (ORSTOM). Since 1997, it has been called the Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD). The African Studies Centre in the Netherlands was established in Rotterdam in 19476 – following the loss of the Dutch-India colony (today's Indonesia) – as the Africa Institute and became the African Studies Centre Leiden in 1958. The Africa Institute of South Africa was established in South Africa in 1960; the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) was established in 1962 by Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway, and the Center of African Studies (CAS) was also founded in Edinburgh in 1962 etc. (for developments in Britain cf. Nugent 2007). These developments were accompanied by the establishment of numerous Africa-related journals in the 1960s.

rapidly Africanized with the development of important schools of historians in Dar-es-Salam and Ibadan. With the support of European colleagues, the African historians there adopted a nationalistic programme with the aim of providing evidence of the pre-colonial historicity of African societies – although contemporary phenomena like nation and nationalism were often “read back” (Fricke 2012) into early colonial or even pre-colonial history. Hence, in the second half of the twentieth century history in Africa assumed a similar function to European historiography in the nineteenth century in Europe, that is one of national self-assurance.

However, even today, African universities outside South Africa are usually poorly resourced in material terms and are seldom able to compete at international level as a result. In purely quantitative terms, the annual output of scientific papers originating from Africa (including North Africa) corresponds to that of the Netherlands – and the majority of them are produced in just three countries, i.e. South Africa, Nigeria and Egypt (Adams, King und Hook 2010). The general crisis in African state budgets since the 1970s resulted in a general decline in public research institutes. Since then, social science research in Africa has been progressively privatized and is often carried out in the institutional context of so-called non-governmental organizations. The research itself is mostly financed by development aid agencies, which can largely impose their own thematic focus as a result as short-term project-based finance is the dominant form of funding provided. Some of these private research institutes have developed into centres of excellence with good national and international connections. However their quality has little influence on the public institutions for teaching and research (Olivier de Sardan 2011). Similar to the development of flight routes, the research landscape in Africa today is akin to a network of enclaves that tend to be integrated into transnational networks rather than national or continental ones.

Despite these limitations, Africans themselves are far more prominent in the research about Africa today than was the case 50 years ago when the scientists who attracted most attention were more likely to be based at universities in the USA and Europe than African ones. Thus, it must be acknowledged that, today too, the centre of the research on most African countries is more likely to be located outside the continent itself than on it. Even if cooperative research formats carried out under the heading of ‘research with rather than research about’ have become more important in Africa research today, the funding, topics and questions for these research initiatives still come from the global North.⁷ In particular, African research capacity that looks beyond the borders of the countries involved is underdeveloped: Nigerians like to carry out research on Nigeria as do Kenyans on Kenya, but they rarely do so on Togo or Uganda.

African studies in the global North and specifically in Germany, which is of particular interest in this context, are more broadly structured in disciplinary terms today than was the case 50 years ago. The discipline is also more likely to be located in the universities than special research institutes as was still the case in the 1960s. Nevertheless, German research on Africa is still dominated by a pattern whereby the majority of social scientist who carry out research on Africa are anthropologists. However, anthropology is a very broad discipline today and deals with issues and topics in relation to Africa that would be more likely to be

7 The majority of the studies which, like this one, were published on the topic of “Fifty Years of Impedence in Africa” were published in Europe or the USA and involved contributions by European/American authors (Coquery-Vidrovitch and D’Almeida-Topor 2010; Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2010). Individual studies compiled or edited by African authors explicitly concentrate on African perspectives (AfricAvenir 2010) and call on intellectuals and creatives to play an active part in the developments in their countries (Gassama 2010; Mbembe 2010); these were also published in Europe.

the focus of other social science and cultural studies if carried out on the global North, for example sociology, political science, theatre, film and music studies.

**Long-term societal trends:
population increase, urbanization, educational expansion, migration**

In addition to the political and economic developments, which occasionally make it into our media, and the cultural developments, which largely fail to do so, Africa is also characterized by far-reaching demographic developments.

The population increase experienced in sub-Saharan Africa in the last century was unprecedented, i.e. it rose from 100 million at the beginning of the colonial period to approximately 280 million in 1960 and 800 million today.⁸ The population density on the continent as a whole increased from around four people per square kilometre in 1870 to almost 40 people today and now exceeds that of Europe and South and North America. At 2.6 percent per year, the sub-Saharan African population is currently the fastest-growing in the world. It is expected to double again by 2050. By then, at the latest, the relative underpopulation, which formed the background to the theories of Goody (1971, 1973) and Kopytoff (1987), will be a thing of the past.

This rapid demographic growth was accompanied by massive shifts in population and rapid urbanization. Around 1960 only ten percent of all Africans lived in cities. This was the lowest number in the world and the urban middle classes were correspondingly small. Today, city-dwellers in Africa account for over 40 percent of the overall population and as much as over half of the population in South and West Africa. In 2030 at the latest, the urban population will exceed the rural population on average. Sub-Saharan Africa, whose biggest cities, Johannesburg and Lagos, had a million and 600,000 inhabitants respectively at the end of the colonial period is becoming a continent of megacities. There are at least 41 of them at present, with Lagos, which has considerably more than ten million inhabitants, leading the field and closely followed by Kinshasa (UN-Habitat 2008).

However, even Africa's rural areas are no longer hotbeds of tradition (if they ever were), but linked to the urban centres in a variety of ways, i.e. economically, politically and culturally. The borders between the expanding urban areas and their rural peripheries are not only shifting to the surrounding countryside, they are also becoming increasingly blurred. Entire regions of Africa, for example the west Atlantic coast of Lagos to Abidjan and the Gauteng province with Johannesburg and Pretoria in the south of the continent, are characterized today by urban and peri-urban agglomerations whose uninterrupted urban landscapes are reminiscent of the Ruhr area in Germany or the east coast of the USA. Cities are usually more productive and more innovative than rural areas, they are easier to access via physical and social infrastructure, and agriculture in proximity to cities is particularly productive and consumer-oriented (Bettencourt and West 2010).⁹

The rural population also developed rapidly since 1960: it has tripled over the last 50 years with a corresponding rise in rural population density (Rauch 2012). The exit options

8 The total population of Africa around 1900 was around circa 135 million; today it has a population of one billion people.

9 On the higher production of the peri-urban landscape, see Cour and Snrech (1998) and the research carried out by the project "*Gestion partagée et durable des espaces agricoles et naturels à la périphérie des centres urbains*", www.ecocite.gret.org [26.05.2012].

available to small African farmers today – that is the possibilities for evading the limitations of extensive agriculture – are more likely to lie in the intensification of their agricultural practices and combining them with non-agricultural income streams and migration to the city than in the possibility of falling back on previously unsettled land.

Simultaneous to population growth and densification and urbanization, school attendance has also experienced a huge surge (Bierschenk 2012a). No other continent had to struggle with such a disastrous colonial heritage in this regard as Africa. Education only became a priority when Africans themselves gained greater political influence in the late colonial period. The belief in progress through school education became one of the major mobilizing myths of the period and has remained so to the present day. But it was not until the late twentieth century, following an unprecedented catch-up development, that Africa reached the school enrolment rates attained by Asian developing countries like South Korea as far back as the mid-1950s.

Wide-ranging forms of migration both within and outside the continent accompany population growth, urbanization and educational expansion. The growing cities are the intersections of mobility practices and diverse migration projects: not only from the country to the city, but also from one city to another, both within and beyond Africa. The lifeworld of actors is not necessarily identical to individual urban spaces: “Cities are not confined places but segments within networks that link them to other cities” (Hahn 2010: 119). It is surely no coincidence that network analysis, which examines such interconnections, was invented in the context of Africa-related urban anthropology in the 1950s. African city-dwellers are cosmopolitans – something that is also reflected in their language (Beck 2012). Some authors now even refer to a separate *ethnie urbaine*, that is city dwellers as a separate ethnic group (McLaughlin 2001: 171).

The growing transnationality of African migrants resulted in the strong, if selective, global presence of Africans in many sectors, from the university, health and care sectors to music, football and street trade. The new forms of transnationality are also a phenomenon that clearly distinguishes the present from the period around 1960.¹⁰ The phenomenon of international migration flows is not directed exclusively at Europe and North America. On the contrary, clear processes involving the ‘de-Atlantification’ of the transnational relationships between Africa and its diaspora can be observed. For example, female traders from Cameroon, Mali and South Africa can also be found today in Malaysia, Indonesia and China; there are currently 20,000 African students in Malaysia, i.e. around the same number as in Germany, and 100,000 Africans are reported to be living in the Chinese business metropolis of Qunzhou (Zezeza 2009).

Thanks to demographic growth and migration, African societies are very young societies: two out of three Africans are under 25 years of age, twice as many as in ageing Europe. This youthfulness of the continent is mainly perceived as problem and many political conflicts in Africa are, in fact, conflicts between the generations. The violent nature that these conflicts sometimes assume can only be understood against the background of a large floating body of young unemployed male city-dwellers. However, the youth of a society also represents an opportunity and it probably provides the basis for the remarkable optimism that underlies the attitude to life found in many places in Africa to the astonishment of foreign observers.

Forms of societal co-existence have differentiated considerably in the course of the rapid urbanization. Wide-ranging new ways of life arise and new forms of diversity are emerging

¹⁰ While the slave trade represented an early form of transnationality, of course.

in the cities, in particular. This process starts with the already mentioned languages: it is estimated that over 500 languages are spoken in a city like Lagos (Beck 2012). However, multilingualism is not merely an urban phenomenon: there are few villages in West Africa in which just one language is spoken. This diversity also applies to family models, for example, of which a large number and variability exists – something that radically undermines our idea of the ‘typical extended African family’ (Alber, Häberlein and Martin 2012, 2010). In striking contrast to the norms of the caring extended family formulated by the social actors themselves, a growing number of old people live alone. The number of monogamous families with few or no children is increasing among young urban dwellers while, at the same time, polygynous forms of marriage continue to exist, not only in rural areas, and are even developing in modern urban milieus. Transnational kinship relationships are also of central importance in many places. Exactly what signifies ‘family’ here can vary enormously: many children grow up with multiple attachment figures who are all somehow their ‘parents’. Hence, the major trend is not the development towards a single family-model, which is considered ‘modern’ but towards the pluralization of ways of life.

The situation with respect to religion is similar. It has often been shown that religious life in Africa is characterized by a very high degree of dynamism and very open boundaries between religious traditions. Religious orientations within one and the same family can vary significantly and take different directions over the course of people’s lives, even extending to the relatively common phenomenon of re-conversion (Langewiesche 2003). Apart from a few exceptions – Northern Nigeria and Sudan being the primary examples here – the relationships between the followers of different religious traditions tend to be relaxed on an everyday level: given the pluralism of religious orientations that can exist even within a single family, debates about the Islamic veil as arise in Germany make little sense. However, the use of a religious idiom to express identity and/or inter-generational conflicts is also on the rise in African societies. Nevertheless, large youth cultures absorb influences from all possible areas and the creative processing of diversity appears to be the norm here. In other words: diversity is practised by Africans in their everyday lives at an intensity that would (still?) be difficult to imagine in Europe. This makes the growing number of young Africans, in particular, into diversity managers *par excellence*, an art about which they possibly have much to teach the ageing population of Europe.

Hence, population growth, urbanization, educational expansion and the great youthfulness of African societies influence the societal dynamics in Africa in a wide variety of ways. These developments in turn affect politics– the democratization movements of the late 1980s and early 1990s would not have been conceivable without the level of urbanization that had already been attained at that point and the educational expansion that had been under way since 1950. We will explore this point in greater detail below.

These societal processes are also a precondition for the emergence of new media and forms of popular culture, new forms of religiosity and consumption (Nugent 2012). This theme is explored in the following sections.

Language, religion and cultural production

Language

The cities with their young populations are the social spaces in which new urban languages have formed against the background of dense multilingualism – these new urban languages can be viewed as a form of response to the aforementioned processes of heterogenization and densification (Beck 2012). Urban languages have developed in Africa since around the beginning of colonial rule. With the trend for youth languages to become urban languages, they have been experiencing a new boom for around 40 years now simultaneous to the post-colonial urbanization processes. Because there is no direct communicative need for these languages – due to the existence of the official national languages – as Beck suggests, these languages should be understood as “icons of urbanism and modernity” (Beck 2010: 26). Like the users of the new consumer products described by Nugent (2010, 2012), the speakers of these languages demonstrate their linguistic competence through their use and make them into a symbol of their competence as urban cosmopolitans. These new forms of language and consumption accommodate a cosmopolitan association, not least also because they are often taken up by local media (Grätz 2012).

The use of an idiom that has neither ethnic nor colonial connotations and is not the language of parents or the elite lends these urban youth languages their unifying character (in the sense of an *ethnie urbaine*, see above). These urban languages sometimes also spread beyond their cities of origin and thus implicitly incorporate the claim of representing the whole, i.e. the nation. Moreover, through their creative use by young urban dwellers, even national languages that only existed ‘on paper’ up to now have become nationally spoken and accepted.

At the same time, the inclusion of African languages is indicative of a focus on the speakers’ own African origins and the colonial legacy. As discussed by Nganang (2012), it could be said that the urban languages are the linguistic form, in which the claim for discursive sovereignty is expressed. However, the young people’s use of language also betrays an inherent ambivalence towards all these reference frameworks. Urban languages also act as a boundary that delineates the adult world, which the young people view as a failure – this would explain the acceleration in the development of these languages in the 1980s as a reaction to the far reaching economic crisis.

Media, art and popular culture

All of the political trends of the previous 50 years can be observed in the area of media, art and popular culture in particular, i.e. from the nationalisms in the aftermath of independence and the ambivalence of the artists towards power-obsessed dictators to the current processes of opening or isolation in the age of globalization. Hence this sector can be generally viewed as an indicator and commentator on social conditions.

In terms of cultural production, Africa has produced Nobel literature laureates and numerous internationally renowned artists over the last 50 years. Both before and after 1960 African writers initially focused on the discursive construction of a national community and on criticizing colonialism. Similar observations can be applied to other fields of artistic creativity. For African film makers, 1960 represented a turning point as it meant that they were able to produce films independently, an opportunity of which they made intensive use under the heading “*décolonisez les écrans*” and the strong influence of Franz Fanon’s ideas

(Kilian 2012, 2010).¹¹ Music was also put to the service of nation building: under Sékou Touré, Guinea-Conakry became the model for a widely copied active nationalistic culture policy. Some African artists sang ‘songs of resistance’ against the colonial rule – in some cases in the style of the West African griots – and produced nation-building music (Dorsch 2010, 2012) which served the legitimization of the independent governments in particular. Paradoxically, the music of the independence period – its soundtrack in other words – sounded Caribbean, with Congolese rumba and Soukous as pan-African music *par excellence*. In this way music established a reference to global modernity and served as a demarcation from the former colonial metropolises.

The subsequent decades saw not only a mood swing from the optimism of independence to a post-colonial tristesse (Oed 2012), but also the emergence of popular genres and new media formats (Grätz 2012). The initially dominant criticism of colonialism and the art forms that supported the new elites and the development of ‘national communities’ were gradually replaced by social criticism and criticism of the elites. The artists made their displeasure about the abuse of power, corruption and neo-colonialism clear and revisited the old topic of the function of art as an important cultural resource and path to cultural autonomy in a new form. The famous novels and films, which had attracted particular notice outside of Africa, were elite artistic creations and are merely one artistic form among others today. The influence this “extroverted” artistic activity (Oed 2012) was able to exert in the artists’ own countries was very limited. Since the 1990s, other (cheaper) formats, for example popular literature, videos, comics and music, have assumed an increasingly prominent role at the local level. A large part of the artistic energy of mostly young African city dwellers flowed into these forms and continues to do so today. Several developments converged here and culminated in the years around 1990: technical innovations in the area of media formats (music cassettes, often produced as pirate copies, digital recording equipment, the possibility to produce videos cheaply, copying and digital printing technology, and the ease of distribution of brochures, VHS tapes, CDs and DVDs) democratized the field of artistic production and made it increasingly difficult for the state to control it. Moreover, these new formats enabled local (mass) print, film and music production that was not dependent on western or state financing. In addition, in the course of the political upheaval around 1990, the originally state-controlled mass media faced competition from independent radio and TV stations and a flourishing tabloid press. As a result, new audiences formed and multiplied, and spread from the cities into the rural areas. The content also changed in the course of these new developments: private radio stations, the tabloid press, videos and other tape- and disk-based media also created a space for positions that were critical of the regimes and for unofficial perspectives on everyday African life, and helped to spread them. The engagement with traditional forms of religion, Islam, and Christianity, Pentecostal churches in particular, takes place in and through these media (Langewiesche 2012) – either in the form of pulp novels, inspirational writings, feature films or in the new genre of conversion videos targeting a hoped-for religious renewal.

‘Major’ novels and films also continue to exist. However, their criticism of structural adjustment programmes and corrupt elites does not culminate in aporia (as was still the case in the 1995 film “Xala” by the Senegalese author Sembène Ousmane),¹² but demonstrates the

11 The establishment of the FESPACO (Festival panafricain du cinema et de la television de Ouagadougou) film festival in 1969 is an important milestone in this process of decolonization.

12 Film version of the 1973 novel of the same name.

available options for action. Today, both the films and popular new literary genres, for example the detective novel, increasingly feature 'black' heroes – and heroines too, like active rebellious women whose central motivation is the emancipation of their daughters (Kilian 2010, 2012). The message of these works is that after the wasting of the historical opportunity of independence by the older generations, Africa must go its own way and find its own vision for the future (Nganang 2012).

Religion

The numerous and growing cities, in particular, provide a stage for the powerful boom in religiosity, which Africa has been experiencing for many decades and has now also spread to rural areas. Not only are different religious mixes and different forms of representing and expressing religiosity developing, but also new ways of establishing transnational networks between religious groups (Langewiesche 2012; Loimeier 2012). Religion is more prominent in the public sphere today and is increasingly becoming a political idiom (cf., *inter alia*, Eickelman and Anderson 1999; Ellis and ter Haar 2004; Meyer and Moors 2006). This presence of religion in everyday life and the public sphere is conveyed not least through the liberalized media. The number of religious programmes on the radio and television has increased significantly since the changes of the 1990s (Grätz 2012). New media technologies also promote new links between politics and religion, which have a particular influence on the young educated urban classes. Accordingly, the boom in religion cannot be understood in isolation from the educational expansion that has taken place since the 1950s. Of course, the transnationalization we already referred to is not a new phenomenon in relation to Christianity and Islam: the Christian and Islamic expansion was one of the first forms of transnational and transcontinental network formation in Africa and already existed in precolonial times. However, it has been possible to observe the development of a transnational religious media culture and a change in the direction of religious ideas, practices and actors in recent times. These no longer move exclusively from North to South today, but also in the opposite direction: African priests now look after German parishes and African churches do missionary work on the European religion market. This change in direction is promoted not least by the new communication possibilities and modern media technology, and by the improved opportunities for travel (cf. Adogame and Spickard 2010).

Europe, whose decline in institutionalized religion constitutes an extreme example in the global context (Berger 1999), has little or no conception of the diversity and intensity of religious forms of expression in Africa.¹³ It is important to stress here that as global religions Christianity and Islam derive particular benefit from this boom in Africa. The number of both Christians and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa has increased significantly in recent years. For example, Muslims in Nigeria have been overtaken in number by the growth of the Pentecostal churches. This has resulted in threatening and marginalization scenarios for many Muslims and is one of the underlying reasons for the current unrests in the Nigerian Middle Belt (Loimeier 2012).

13 The theory that religion relinquished its influence in Europe in the process of modernization mainly derives from the decline in organized ecclesiality in Western Europe. The theory has already been relativized in the 1960ies with Luckman's reference to "invisible religion" (Luckmann 1991 [1967]), i.e. religion did not relinquish its significance in the European modernist period but merely its institutional framework, and adopted more individual content and more private forms. On this point, cf. Gabriel, Gärtner and Pollack (2012) and Hervieu-Léger (1999).

Christianity and Islam now arise in increasingly diverse forms and manifestations. The pluralization of Christianity goes back to the late colonial period when Christianity was clearly Africanized in the African Independent Churches (AIC) – the impetus for this was closely linked with the history of independence, initially from the mission churches and then from colonial paternalisms (Langewiesche 2012). This Africanization received an additional boost from political independence and the Second Vatican Council. Since the 1980s, the Christian scene has been shaped by the rise of the Pentecostalism and evangelical movements. These forms of Christian religion, which have enjoyed such enormous success at both local and global levels, particularly confirm how religion is an increasing presence in everyday life and the public sphere.

The development of Islam presents a parallel course in many respects. Patterns formed during the colonial period also remained valid after 1960. With the important exceptions of Nigeria and Sudan, which dominate the media reporting, the secular state is largely accepted by African Muslims (Bröning and Weiss 2005).¹⁴ Thus religion is not (yet?) a crucial category of difference in the majority of African states.

The spectrum of religious orientations within Islam is also broadening, both among the Sufi orders and among the modern activist groups. Contrary to what is often feared in our media, due to the increase in the number of religious leaders who claim authority of interpretation and the accompanying fragmentation of religious authority, which leads to numerous internal conflicts among Muslims, Islam in itself is unlikely to become a viable basis for enduring political mobilization (Loimeier 2012).

Muslims were also involved in and contributed to the media revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sometimes spurred on by the competition between Christian groups. The dissemination of religious texts increased markedly from the late nineteenth century; they were joined by newspapers in the early twentieth century, then radio (from the 1950s), television (1970s) and the internet (since the 1990s). Muslims were also active and connected at transnational level through trade, scholarly travel and pilgrimage. Numerous African Muslims have been living in Europe and North America for some years now, albeit less commonly in the capacity of missionaries than as economic migrants. It is the relationships with the Islamic world from Lebanon to Indonesia, that is the Southern networks that tend to be intensified through the Islamic mission.¹⁵

Political economy: a difficult colonial inheritance

The fact that the independent African governments came into an extremely difficult inheritance was obscured by the euphoria of the independence period (Nugent 2004: 58ff; cf. also Asche 2011). With their extreme imbalances in terms of internal population distribution and the access to resources, the colonies were extremely idiosyncratic, even in their external form. The demarcation of the colonial borders had created many micro-states (eight out of 45) and land-locked states with no access to the sea (11 out of 45), whose capitals were often located in close proximity to the borders. In contrast, other states like the Belgian Congo and Sudan

14 Even in relation to the conflictive situations in Nigeria and Sudan, it must be stressed that religion is merely one of a number of fault lines, i.e. along with social issues, ethnicity and politics.

15 African religious traditions (which are often referred to as African 'traditional' or 'indigenous' religions) are also remarkably dynamic and even regionalizing or globalizing. It is not possible to deal with this topic in detail in the context of this paper (cf. Olupona 2004).

were almost as big as Europe. The differences in size between the individual countries are enormous, for example Sudan is almost 240-times bigger than Gambia. However, at the time of independence, most countries were medium-sized with a population below ten million and, therefore, given the poverty of the populations, had very limited internal markets. Apart from South Africa, no country boasted a developed infrastructure: communications networks were lacking as were electricity connections and water pipes (Cooper 2002: 101).

The colonial legacy

The independent African governments took over economies that had been reduced to the export of a few or, in some cases, just one primary product during the colonial period.¹⁶ This also applied to the more affluent countries, for example Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, whose more or less only export product was (and still is) cocoa and gold respectively. Agriculture in large parts of the continent is extremely fragile and no country apart from South Africa had any industry worth mentioning in 1960. However, the structural weakness of the African economies was initially obscured by the relatively high prices of primary products in the 1950s.

The elites themselves were extremely small in number. Only a few countries like Ghana and Nigeria had a significant number of university graduates, and well-trained employees are still lacking in all countries today – with the result that many positions are held by people who do not have the training necessary to exercise them: for example, court clerks function as judges, nurses as doctors, primary school graduates as teachers, and scientists who have recently completed their doctorates as the heads of institutes and deans of universities. The presence of the national elites at regional level also tended to be very patchy, a factor that gave national politics an unavoidable regionalist bias. This elite was primarily an educated elite; a capitalist entrepreneurial class only existed in South Africa (where a simultaneous and paradoxical attempt was made to develop industrial capitalism without a working class). The few African entrepreneurs who existed outside of South Africa were – and still are – highly dependent on political patronage (cf. footnote 27).

The decolonization of the years around 1960, which was mostly achieved through negotiation, must, therefore, also be viewed as an attempt by the European colonial powers to escape these problems and unload them onto the shoulders of African politicians. The colonies had simply become too expensive for them, particularly when a conviction about the urgent need for economic development in the colonies took root both in Europe and among the African elites (Cooper 2008, 2011).

Postcolonial economic development: the continuing dominance of rentier income

Thus, Africa's postcolonial elites were small in number, poorly educated, poorly prepared for the situation that faced them and fixated on the state. They lacked confidence and tended towards factionalism. The post-1960 economic developments quickly made their limits clear to them. In terms of development policy, they relied on a strategy of state-centred import substitution and in doing this they backed the wrong horse, so to speak. Although this policy created the basis for the small industry that still exists in Africa today, the strategy was con-

¹⁶ This distinguishes European colonialism in Africa from Japanese colonialism in Korea, for example, where heavy industry was established under Japanese colonial rule. On this topic, see Young (1988).

demned to failure in the long term. In contrast, all of the successful Asian developing countries – from Japan to South Korea and China – opted for a model of industry-based export-orientation which, moreover, had already formed the basis for Europe's successful catch-up development in the nineteenth century. However, the agenda-setting of the late colonial period prevented the adoption of such a development trajectory in Africa: the local labour costs were far too high to accommodate such an approach.

The African elites were not solely responsible for this erroneous development policy decision as their economic policy enjoyed the support of numerous foreign consultants – a fact that those outside Africa later liked to forget. Over the last half century no other continent was the target of so many well-intended suggestions and political experiments proposed from abroad, a process that led to the implementation of a succession of development paradigms which replaced each other with confusing haste.

In the area of agricultural policy, the statist development model, on which the industrialization policy was based, involved the attempt to exert state control over production, i.e. through the control of the inputs and credits and through marketing boards, major donor-financed rural development projects and, in some cases, even state farms. This policy reflected the interests of city dwellers as the prices paid to the produces were kept artificially low in this way. Ultimately the policy failed due to the tendency for the price of cash crops to collapse on the global market (Rauch 2012).

The import substitution strategy shattered in the early 1970s due to the impact of the oil crisis. Two decades of economic decline followed, which are sometimes referred to in the literature as 'lost' time. In the 1980s this resulted in high levels of debt and the implementation of structural adjustment measures under the International Monetary Fund in most countries. As Asche (2012) demonstrates, the structural adaptations did not give rise to any economic structural change worthy of mention after 1990: today, manufacturing industry in Africa still only accounts for eight percent of gross domestic product, as was the case in 1960, and the majority of this is generated in South Africa (by way of comparison, the corresponding figure for East Asia is 45 percent). Agriculture diversified significantly after 1990 and has been experiencing a boom in demand, particularly since 2005. However, only agricultural producers in favourable locations, for example the environs of the cities, benefit from the associated sales opportunities, and small farmers in remote areas are largely unaffected. The noteworthy fact that food production in Africa was more or less able to keep pace with population development was generally the outcome of agricultural extensification rather than intensification (Rauch 2012).

The high growth figures that have been recorded in Africa for a few years are primarily due to mining and oil production. Hence, the current boom is, first and foremost, another impact of the volatile trend in the price of primary goods: it is not an indicator of structural transformation. The emergence of new actors like Brazil, India and, above all China, has not had any impact on this 'colonial' orientation of the African economy. The majority of African countries remain low-level diversifiers with a high level of external orientation. Intra-regional trade is still weak, the commercial sector is highly informalized and dominated by small and very small operations, and an autonomous business community has been very slow to develop outside of South Africa (Asche 2012).

What is perhaps most remarkable is that of the growing number of African oil producing countries, none has reaped any sustained benefits from oil production in terms of economic and social development. This is not surprising in the least. Historical experience has shown that the income from oil production in poor countries whose economies are dominated by

the oil business has rarely triggered any processes of economic transformation: for example, 90 years after it started producing oil, Venezuela is still completely dependent on it. This historical experience has been formalized in the theories on the so-called oil-rentier states (Beck 1993). Apart from South Africa and a few industrial zones in East Africa, all of the sub-Saharan African economies are dominated to a greater or lesser extent by rentier income. This dependence on rent represents a major line of continuity since the colonial period. In accordance with classical economic theory, in this context rent encompasses all income that does not involve any investment of capital or labour.¹⁷ It is possible to distinguish between different types of rent and different variations. The first is the classical type of the oil-based rentier state, which is similar to the prototype of the Arab gulf state, i.e. with relatively stable autocratic government redistribution policy as a governance technique, and exists in Africa. Gabon could be described as an African example of this type of state, however its forms of rule appear less institutionalized than those of the Gulf states and its redistribution policy is less inclusive (Yates 1996). Some authors refer, second, to a 'leopard spot' type, which develops when the oil-based social contract collapses or does not arise in the first place, and tightly corralled production enclaves are surrounded by ungovernable regions, which are locations of violence and transnational humanitarianism. Ferguson (2005) develops this type based on the example of Angola (albeit without detailed empirical research), however his ideas appear to be more relevant to the Niger Delta in Nigeria (cf. Anugwom 2011; Watts 2004, 2008). (The most extreme example is, perhaps, the pirate economy of Somalia, which can also be understood as a rentier economy.) Third, there are isolated examples of resource-dependent countries which have succeeded in controlling the flow of resources. The only example of an African country with tendencies in this direction up to now is Botswana with its diamond economy. Niger and Ghana are currently pursuing the intention of creating institutions that generate 'monitored' rent from the oil income (something that was attempted without success in Chad, cf. Pegg 2005).

Thus oil production has also led the emergence of another form of rent in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, the pattern of the rentier economy itself was not eliminated by it. The model of the rentier state is not in fact linked with the production of oil and other non-agricultural primary goods. It can also be extended to other forms of rentier income. Transfer income from development aid,¹⁸ on which many African countries are dependent, can also be described as rentier income or income with rent-dependent effects. In contrast to oil rent, this is

17 Hence rentier theory is also a class theory and an ethical doctrine: the productive classes of the capitalist entrepreneur and paid workforce is contrasted with the 'unproductive' class of the landowner. The advantage of this theory is that it looks beyond purely statistical economic indicators like growth figures and examines the structure of economies; to put it in Marxist terms, it raises the question regarding the possibilities of "original capitalistic accumulation ": Under which social conditions is income productively invested? The discussion also unfolds under the headings of "resource curse" (Auty 1993; Behrends und Schareika 2011) or, somewhat less dramatically, that of the "paradox of plenty" (Karl and Schmitter 1997). The concept of the "foreign-oriented" state (developed by Evers (1987) based on the example of the history of South East Asia) and the "extraversion" of African societies (Bayart 1989) have similar connotations. The term 'rentier state' which refers to the structure of political economies should be differentiated from that of 'rent seeking', which shows that rent phenomena are very common in all capitalist economies (Krueger 1974). This could, however, be based on a kind of conceptual tautology as – to overstate things somewhat – it could be said that for neoclassical economists, rent is a concept for thinking about the social or political.

18 We consciously use the term 'development aid' here rather than the politically correct but highly ideologically loaded term 'development cooperation' here. The latter obscures the power gap and political interests that govern the interactions between the donors, who enjoy discursive hegemony in this field, and the recipients.

a rent that is “scrutinized” by foreign actors (Collier 2005). This monitoring increases the chances that minimum standards relating to human rights, democracy and good governance will be observed. However, the countries that depend on development aid are victims of the democracy-theory paradox whereby the fundamental social contract is not concluded between the population and government but between the government and donors. It is not possible to observe any systematic development impetus that would channel the development of the rentier state model in the direction of a productive economy here either. Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Tanzania can be cited as examples of this type of aid-dependent rentier state.

The increasing income from cash transfers from migrants to the African continent, i.e. remittances, also have similar effects to rent in the target countries. Remittances are neither sovereign rents – as they subject to little or no control by the African countries – nor supervised rents – as they enter the country from decentralized sources. The proceeds of these transfers appear to be used mainly for social and consumption expenditure and are rarely invested in productive activities, either by the migrants abroad or their families in the African country of origin. Similarly, they have little or no impact on structural development (Herold 2008; Mazzucato, Boom and Nsowah-Nuamah 2008).

Finally, a series of African economies are dependent on agrarian rents, for example Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya, Zimbabwe (the last two combined with capitalist industrialization approaches) and, partly also, South Africa. In these cases too, the rentier income is often – and in many countries even predominantly – used for safeguarding political power (on Côte d’Ivoire, see the good overview of the literature provided by Hällmeyer 2011).

Compared to other forms of rent, development aid in Africa has lost ground in recent decades (Asche 2012) while the income from oil, mining (i.e. so-called ‘sovereign’ rents) and remittances has increased. Hence, 50 years after independence, African capitalisms remain ‘appendix’ capitalisms, that is peripheral forms of capitalism without developed national bourgeoisies and paid workforces. Accordingly, African business capitalists and the weak state-based paid workforce do not develop any visions of alternative societal projects. In this sense, we may refer to the basic continuation of the colonial political-economic structures.

Against this background, the rise of a neoliberal development model, which shaped the development policy of the last 20 years, appears paradoxical in two respects: on the one hand, this model attempts to shift the control of the economy from state to private actors in a situation in which there is no capitalist private sector, or at least none that is interested in investing in the commercial sector of the economy; on the other hand, this model dominates international development policy in a situation in which the relative importance of the sums transferred through development aid is clearly declining.

The purpose of neoliberal structural policy today is no longer the simple transfer of resources as was characteristic of the first phase of development policy up to the early 1970s. The aims are not limited to influencing macroeconomic factors either, as was usual for the structural adjustment programmes. Instead, the aim today is the, externally-controlled, fundamental redesign of African societies (Li 2006, 2007; Young 2003). For example, the World Bank does not simply finance schools but tries to prescribe in detail how these schools should be managed and what the children should learn (Fichtner 2010a, 2010b). Moreover, the latest reforms are also concerned with creating the autonomous individual, which is the precondition for the functioning of the market and other dimensions of society, through the propagation of techniques of self-guidance. However, the demonization of this ‘neoliberal project’ ignores the reality of the situation: on the one hand, the aforementioned Pentecostal

churches have long appropriated this project and through the so-called prosperity gospel instruct their numerous followers about different forms of ‘work of the self on the self’ (cf. Marshall 2009). On the other hand, in Africa in particular, this project is met with long-standing strategies of (mostly indirect) resistance, which have enjoyed frequent success since colonial times. The forms these strategies assume include the selective adoption of measures and their re-interpretation, evasion and resilience (Olivier de Sardan 1988; van de Walle 2001).

The emergence of African nations

From the phase of decolonization, which started after the Second World War, African political leaders and foreign observers observed an increasingly close link between the state, elites, economic development, societal modernization and the emergence of African nations (Fricke 2012; Behrends and Pauli 2012). Precisely how these factors are linked, however, was repeatedly understood in different ways. In the 1950s and ‘60s there were great expectations of the state as the primary agent of modernization. In the subsequent two decades, these excessive hopes of the state and the elites who led it met with equally profound disappointment – a fall from a great height, so to speak. In the 1980s, this was linked with a general debate on the future of the nation state, which many observers saw as being in decline in the face of globalization (Fricke 2012).

In relation to Africa, this disappointment prompted the emergence of an African exceptionalism thesis: an opposition was developed between nationalism and the nation state which was supposed to be the global norm, on the one hand, and dominating ethnicity or ‘tribalism’, which were considered ‘typically African’, on the other (Lentz 1995).

Meanwhile the predicted global disappearance of the nation-state has proved incorrect. The nation state merely had to deal with different challenges post-1990. It remains a key framework of the social order and an automatic political reference—including in Africa. The independence day celebrations, in particular, showed that by then African nations were “completely normal nations ... which experience as much patriotism and commitment and political fatigue, criticism, and doubt about national unity as European nation-states” (cf. Lentz 2012: 211). However, important differences exist between individual states in terms of the forms taken by nationalism and national feeling. Some nations like Madagascar (Molter and Späth 2011) were able to connect with precolonial institutions and the claim of nation-state unity at least. In other countries, like Nigeria and Chad, colonial rule brought together extremely heterogeneous entities that failed to find any inner unity for decades. Today, all of these countries can enjoy moments of shared remembrance as nations. Nationalism and national feeling are not necessarily defined as shared values but above all, after Karl Deutsch (1972), as participation in the same discursive space. Thus, an intensive national discourse about ethnic identities does not constitute any opposition to nationalism, but is precisely that: a n a t i o n a l discourse.

Furthermore, the special case thesis in relation to African nation-building fails to recognize the fact that the development of an active national movement in Europe also led to nationalism, and that national identity only developed in the context of existing states and did not in any way precede them. However, it is already misleading to see the emergence of ‘nation’ as a unique event, at which the state acts as a midwife, so to speak. Nation, national

feeling and nationalism are rather phenomena that emerge from the practices and discourses of social actors. The elites are not the only important group here (in the sense of top-down nationalism), but also other actors, who practise and generate forms of everyday nationalism, for example through cultures of consumption and the media which act in the national space. Thus, postcolonial national communities actually did form under the influence of growing school attendance, the greater penetration of the everyday sphere by the state, new media formats, and new forms of popular and mainly urban culture (Fricke 2012; Lentz 2012; Nugent 2012, 2010; Grätz 2012; on the development of national music styles, see Dorsch 2010, 2012, on the linguistic dimension of this development, see Beck 2012, 2010). Anyone who considers Africa solely from the perspective of ethnic conflicts and local identities overlooks this consolidation of the nation.

The variety of political governance models

Africa was the scene of a particularly repressive variant of European colonialism in the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth (Young 1994). For its part, classical political anthropology was fascinated by Africa because many of its societies demonstrated the possibility of political order without the state (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940). With independence, Africa became a laboratory for all possible forms of political order, with or without the state: different variants of party democracy, decentralization and local self-administration emerged. In the 1960s and '70s, in particular, dictatorships of different types and democracies of different hues could be found there, including the special form of exclusive settler democracies. There were civil governments, monarchies, and military regimes and ideological orientations, which ranged from an extremism that could be described as Stalinist (Ethiopia) and different variants of an African socialism (Ghana, Tanzania) to pro-Western forms of an African capitalism (Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya); different types of anticolonial liberation movements and secessionist or irredentist movements also existed; and, finally, there were and still are regions, particularly in the larger countries, which remained and remain virtually untouched by the central state. Scarcely a single state has been limited to one model of governance over the last 50 years: individual countries were able to move closer to one model and then another over the course of time, and mixed forms were the rule (Meyns 2012).

All of the political forms shared a strong fixation on a model of the bureaucratic state that was adopted from the colonial period. Its Africanization did not consist in a change in structures but simply in the replacement of the personnel (Asche 2011). This colonial state had no division of powers, fostered a predilection for privilegism among its officials and, due to its actual under-administration, was systematically reliant on the contribution of middlemen (Spittler 1981). These features provided a gateway for the everyday corruption that had already been widespread during the colonial period and for the rooting of patrimonial logics at the heart of the administrative action. Given that, as we have seen, the majority of African states are rentier states, the fixation on the central state and the high incidence of patrimonialism were placed on an enduring footing.

In retrospect, the different forms of African socialism can be interpreted as attempts to reform these structures adopted from the colonial period – for example in the education sector and in the area of public administration (Bierschenk 2012a, 2012b). They failed in the face of the economic policy contradictions, which had been jointly supported by the African elites and foreign advisors. However, it is remarkable to note that this is applicable to almost all of

the ideological variants – from left to right – that emerged in Africa between 1960 and 1980. From a long-term perspective, the overall performance of the socialist regimes in particular is perhaps less negative than it appeared in the late 1980s. The comparison of Tanzania and Kenya, for example or of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire would suggest that socialist orientations provided a more solid basis for long-term stability than the regimes that focused on relatively uninhibited private initiative. Indeed, some of the socialist regimes were more successful, particularly when it came to containing ethnic-regional factionalism and developing state structures.

Even if its presence remains patchy, fragile and conflictive, overall the state is a far more prominent presence in African societies today than it was at the end of the colonial period. Public administrations with a focus on the health and education systems were rapidly developed after 1960; prior to that, they had only existed in a rudimentary form.

Global political upheavals, the increased complexity of African societies and the deteriorating economic crises formed the backdrop to the drive for liberalization and democratization in many African countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s – an 'African spring' that preceded the Arab counterpart by 20 years. This prompted a marked increase in the number of armed conflicts and civil wars (some on the scale of genocide), however, not least as a result of the liberalization of the media. It has since been possible to at least contain if not resolve most of these conflicts and, moreover, others that had been smouldering for decades, for example in Sudan and Chad. Military putsches and military dictatorships, which dominated the political history of Africa of the first 20 years after independence, tend to be rare occurrences in Africa today.

In the course of these developments, political conditions on the continent became far more diverse. At one end of the spectrum, we find the democratic 'model countries' like Benin, Ghana and South Africa. In these countries political decentralization from the 1990s led not only to the re-opening of political spaces but also to a further intensification of statehood. The state now attempts – not necessarily successfully – to intervene in societal matters in an unprecedented way through reforms of land and family law, for example.

Today, these intensifying structures of statehood are faced with a vital civil society that was only beginning to emerge in 1960. The developments in this area are also contradictory, however: the end of the Cold War destabilized state structures in many countries on the African continent (e.g. Zaire/Congo), and the vitality of civil society is entirely capable of assuming destructive tendencies as occurred in Rwanda. Thus, the process of democratization remains precarious everywhere. In other countries like the Central African Republic and parts of the two Congos, the state is merely a kind of façade. In others, again, the civil wars are more a sign (or even a consequence) of the strength of the regime, for example in Zimbabwe. Finally, there are some, albeit very few, so-called collapsed states, for example Somalia – which functions nonetheless extremely well in parts (Somaliland) but lacks international recognition. It is also important to avoid viewing the categorizations in this context as final – the experience of Uganda, Sierra Leone and Liberia shows that 'collapsed' states can consolidate again relatively quickly. Very energetic forms of central government can grow out of civil wars, as is the case in Rwanda, and as the former model states of Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe show, economic success and democratization can also be temporary. Most African states are located somewhere between these categories. They are authoritarian democracies (as in Togo, Gabon, Cameroon and Chad) with strong tendencies towards personal rule. In this respect, they correspond to a political type that can be encountered frequently

throughout the world. Or they persist in a state of fragile statehood like the Central African Republic (Bierschenk und Olivier de Sardan 1997) and parts of the Congo.

At the same time, new forms of governance have developed: whereas during the colonial period and up to around 1990, the forms of political sovereignty and political responsibility were relatively unambiguous, with a dyadic state structure, on the one hand, and a largely rural society, on the other, increasingly diffuse forms of governance have existed since the 1980s, which connect the local, national and international levels with each other and establish new links between private and public actors.¹⁹

Historical watersheds in the twentieth century: 1940, 1960 or 1990?

Any summary of half a century of independence in Africa must ask the question as to the actual significance of the year 1960 for African history. Of course, 17 African colonies became independent that year and their governments celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of this event in 2010 with varying degrees of pomp and ceremony (Lentz and Kornes 2011). But, beyond this event of formal political independence, does 1960 also represent an important turning point in another respect, in the areas of the economy, society and culture, or in relation to the deep political structures?

The importance of 1960 tends to be relativized in the latest presentations of recent African history. This is even true of Paul Nugent (2004), who adopts “flag independence” as the explicit starting point of his book on the recent history of Africa. While the title of the book suggests a clear turning point, the text is more nuanced and argues against the idea of a “sharp rupture” (56). Nugent sees continuities between the colonial and post-colonial phase, particularly in three dimensions. First in the continuing presence of Europeans and European capital well into the post-1960 period; second in the continued existence of a culture of command on the part of the ruling class, which corresponded on the part of the ruled to tried-and-tested strategies of “compliance, evasion and resistance”; and, third, in the continuation of a development regime that began in the colonial period and has been perpetuated to the present under the auspices of a universal human rights discourse.

Frederick Cooper is even more explicit. As he sees it: “[I]n many ways, the time of World War II (really the late 1930s through the late 1940s) is as important a break point as the moment of independence” (Cooper 2002: xi). Inspired in all likelihood by Braudel, whom he does not quote, Cooper pleads for the differentiation of the temporal rhythms depending on the dimension of social life in question (85-90). Hence in the context of the economic development of Africa, the period from the late 1940s to 1973 represents a clearly marked phase of a specifically African variant of the developmental state which entered into a lengthy crisis with the oil price shock.

In contrast, he argues, the significance of formal independence for political and state development is a more complex matter: it accelerated the Africanization of the political and administrative personnel, however in doing this it merely continued a process that had also started in the 1950s. Moreover, independence offered African politicians new possibilities for investment in social networks. However, this too was hardly a completely new phenomenon

¹⁹ A variety of terms have been used to describe this phenomenon in the literature, which, of course, is not exclusive to Africa. These range from polycephaly (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 1998, 2003) and fragmented/divided/overlapping sovereignty (Randeria 2006) to heterarchy (Bellagamba and Klute 2008), to name just a few.

after 1960. One of the key political contradictions of post-colonial Africa arose from this: between the developing state whose interventionist tendencies further intensified after 1960 under the heading of nationalism and modernization, on the one hand, and the populist-clientelist orientation of its politicians, on the other. In addition, another continuity can be identified from Cooper's (1996) other studies, that is the underfinancing of the public sector, which can be observed to the present day: during the social conflicts of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the African personnel of the colonial states formulated demands for equal material treatment to their European counterparts. The associated costs were one of the major reasons that the colonial powers shifted towards the aim of decolonization in the course of the 1950s – an objective that had seemed to be decades away at the beginning of the decade. For the states that gained independence in 1960 this resulted in loans whose repayment far exceeded the capacities of their economies. Hence, many of the colonies that became independent were basically incapable of economic survival (for example Chad, Gabon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Cape Verde), however, thanks to oil production, some of them did manage to become so, albeit temporarily.²⁰

In contrast, 1960 marked a clear if negative rupture in the area of political participation: the democratic developments that had tentatively started in 1950 in the late phase of colonial rule were soon quashed after 1960 – a phase characterized by a “shrinking political arena” (Kasfir 1976). Thus for many Africans 1960 did not herald liberation but new forms of repression.

The importance of 1960 is also relative from the perspective of anthropologists who focus on history and tend to view the decolonization process from the perspective of the rural periphery: the local populations, particularly those based in the hinterland of the capital cities, have little or no memory of independence year. At local level, people have far clearer memories of the end of forced labour in the French colonies (see, for example, Olivier de Sardan 1984 on Niger), the quashing of the anticolonial movements, repressive resettlement measures by the new governments (e.g. in Benin in 1962, cf. Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 1998), phases of economic boom or great hunger, and the incipient activity of political parties in the 1950s (Lentz 2002).

Finally, the idea of a radical rupture in 1960 must also be relativized because the majority of the countries that became independent in that year were former French colonies, in which the continuity between the 1950s and 1960s was particularly marked. Although colonial resistance existed in the Francophone colonies, it took the form of weakly organized national movements at best. With the exception of Sékou Touré in Guinea-Conakry, up to the mid-1950s, the development of an independent nation state on the basis of the colonial borders was only seen as one option by the majority of the Franco-African politicians, and not the preferred one. Another option that was seriously pursued, and initially appeared genuinely attractive to French politicians but quickly proved to be too expensive, was that of an equal union with France; another, again, was the establishment of independent federations of former colonies (which soon collapsed, however) (Cooper 2011). The solution that emerged was formal independence *en bloc* with the continuation of close relations with France. Some African politicians viewed it with reluctance (Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire) or open opposition (Mba, who had a preference for the annexing of Gabon to France as an overseas *département*). In contrast, the British colonies were granted independence individually: Sudan in

20 Some of the colonies were also simply too small (in terms of both territory and population density) to be capable of economic survival.

1956, Ghana in 1957, Nigeria in 1960, Kenya in 1963. Supranational options were not seriously up for debate²¹ and, despite the Pan-African rhetoric of many politicians, for this reason the nation-state appeared to be the natural and, indeed, only prospect for the future. In contrast, the question of national independence was only vehemently pursued in Francophone countries with socialist regimes, for example in Congo-Brazzaville from 1969, Benin from 1974, Madagascar from 1975 and Burkina Faso from 1983. This nationalistic impetus was expressed *inter alia* in the Africanization of the country names: just as Gold Coast had been renamed Ghana, Dahomey became Benin, French-Sudan became Mali, Obervolta became Burkina Faso and the Republic of the Congo became Zaire.

Thus, to avoid falling into a misleading “capital city perspective” (Lentz 2002) or simply projecting European perspectives onto Africa (as was the case, for example, when 1960 was declared *l’année de l’Afrique* in 2010 in Paris), it clearly makes sense to work on the assumption of an extended temporal concept of decolonization (Brandstetter and Neubert 2002).

The contributions to Bierschenk and Spies (2012) also relativize the historical significance of 1960 considerably. They do this not least because they focus on economic, societal, religious and cultural developments, which are more strongly shaped by logics of the *longue durée* than the historical political event. Although all of the authors took direction from 1960 as a metaphor for political independence, it was only a meaningful marker of central developments in the rarest of cases: the classification of the cultural and societal dynamics into precolonial, colonial and post-colonial phases proves all too Eurocentric (McClintock in Oed 2012).

However 1990 emerges as a more decisive turning point in many of the contributions collected in Bierschenk and Spies (2012) than in Cooper’s and Nugent’s somewhat older overviews.²² Africa experienced profound and critical transformations in many sectors around 1990 that converged in many ways, were mutually reinforcing and led cumulatively to the emergence of clearly innovative social conditions. This observation of a historical rupture around 1960 should only be understood, of course, in the sense of the formation of historical ideal types. Periodizations are analytical tools and are just as indispensable to historical analysis as they are to sociological type formation. Moreover, obvious continuities exist beyond the year 1990.

Unlike 1960, the year 1989/1990 was also significant in the context of global history. Because many developments cannot be linked with a particular year or a single historical event like the fall of the Berlin Wall, it would appear more appropriate to refer to the “long 1980s”²³ as an important period of change. What is intended here is the period between the oil price shock of 1973 – when the African economies slid into a deep crisis – and the abolition of Apartheid in South Africa in 1994. The latter was not only a monumental political

21 Even if Nyerere temporarily considered postponing Tanzania’s independence to become independent with Kenya and Uganda. We would like to thank Peter Meyns for drawing our attention to this.

22 A revised second edition of Nugent 2004 was published in 2012 which maintains the rather non-euphoric view of the post-1990 political processes.

23 We adopt this term, i.e. the “long 1980’s”, from Sandra Barnes, who used it in her summary of the Dahlem Conference in Berlin in March 2011, which she organized jointly with Richard Rottenburg. She is explicitly playing with historical concepts like that of the “long nineteenth century” (1789-1914) and “short twentieth century” (1917-1989) coined by Eric Hobsbawm (1998) here. Some of the following ideas in this paper were developed in the discussions at this conference. Cf. also the concept of the “short century”, which was used by Okwui Enwezor, the Director of Documenta 11 in 2002, along with Chinua Achebe in reference to the period between the liberation from the colonial yoke in 1945 and the abolition of Apartheid in 1994 (Enwezor and Achebe 2001).

event, but – with the ‘return to Africa’ of the only industrialized economy south of the Sahara – established for the first time the necessary (albeit not sufficient) precondition for the resolution of Africa’s problems of economic development.

The importance of 1989/90 is, of course, most obvious in the area of politics: the political transformation of these years is also referred to by some political activists and authors as a “second independence” (Meyns 2012); successful instances of democratization as arose in Benin, Ghana and South Africa, must indeed be described as a (peaceful) political revolution. Democratization, decentralization and a redefinition of the role of the state were characteristic of the period that began in 1989/90. In the 1990s non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which had been active in the area of international development aid since the 1980s, developed into important, if sometimes rather overestimated actors that increasingly assumed service tasks which were not (or no longer) fulfilled by the state. From a local perspective, they became important employers as a result of this development. However, in terms of the relationship between state, citizens and international donors, they play an ambivalent civil-society role. Not only are NGOs very dependent on donors, both financially and in respect of the methods and content of their work, they also promote a form of international cooperation that ignores the elected bodies, for example national parliaments and local councils, while simultaneously demanding the promotion of democracy and ‘good governance’.

As Ruppert and Rompel (2012) show, the liberalization processes that took place around 1990 also brought about, not least, better opportunities for women. New patterns of female participation and representation developed and new possibilities for the assertion of women’s interests. For the most part, the post-colonial states created around 1960 were initially the exclusive spheres of male elites. This was also true to a lesser extent of the socialist regimes like Tanzania and Benin. However, women have become more prominent as state actors in Africa since 1989: the presence of women in the parliaments and civil society has increased enormously and gender equality was enshrined in many of the new constitutions written post-1990 – although similar to the situation in the education sector, Anglophone Africa enjoys a commanding lead over its Francophone counterpart in this regard. Like other forms of civil-society policy, women’s policy was also transnationalized. Thus, even if transnationalization can involve new financial and discursive dependencies, overall, the rupture around 1990 resulted in the extension of the scope for action available to women.

Clear tendencies towards political liberalization and democratization have also existed since the 1990s, however they have not always been accompanied by economic development. Nevertheless, the year 1990 can also be more clearly identified as a turning point in the economic history of the continent than 1960. The periodization for economic development proposed by Cooper (2002: 85-90), i.e. 1940–1973 as a phase of the African developing state with positive growth and sustained increase in per-capita income, is largely confirmed by Asche (2012). Asche extends the periodization, however, to the present day with the clear upturn in the economy post-1990. Following the second oil price shock of 1982/83, in particular, the 1980s was an extremely crisis-ridden decade. The upturn after 1990 was the product of, first, deregulation, which had been achieved through the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s, but, second and above all, the reduction of African countries’ debt: rates of indebtedness fell from around 80 percent of gross domestic product to 20 percent (a rate that would enable African countries to fulfil the criteria of the Maastricht criteria).

Like the economic growth rates, school enrolment also increased significantly again after 1990 – following a decade of crisis, in which it had actually fallen again in many countries (Bierschenk 2012a). This marked the continuation of the upward trend that had started in

most African countries in the 1950s but had been interrupted by the economic crises of the 1980s and the structural adjustment measures, which were supposed to constitute a response to this crisis.

Thus the key concepts used in reference to the upturn around 1990 are deregulation, diversification and transnationalization. Deregulation, which was initially restricted to the area of economic policy, had consequences that went beyond the political and economic spheres and penetrated far into the area of the media and religious development. In the area of the media, two developments coincided here that mutually reinforced each other: the easing of the state control of the media was accompanied by technological development – a global phenomenon – which enabled the emergence of the internet, the mobile telephone²⁴ and many new small forms of media that would be difficult for the state to control (Grätz 2012). This should not be seen as an exclusively technological development alone as it has led to a significant change in public spaces. As is also the case elsewhere, partly interconnected sub-audiences are developing in Africa, each of which has its own circle of participants, range and communication rules, and new interconnections are arising between local, national and transnational audiences and between religion, the media and politics. Thus, the question as to what this simultaneous expansion and segmentation of audiences means for the concept of citizenship and democratic participation in the long term must remain open.

A similar dynamic also emerged in the artistic sphere where a new audience was reached through new technologies, and where new possibilities for producers, and transnational references extended the creative spectrum (for example through the world music market and local remakes of Hollywood blockbusters). Similarly, Langewiesche (2012) and Loimeier (2012) showed that many religious developments that originated in the colonial period accelerated after 1960, and assumed a new quality after 1990 in the context of the deregulation of politics and the media.

To summarize these observations: against the background of the African continent's rapid urbanization and the youthful nature of its population, the post-1990 period is characterized by new media-related artistic and religious forms and new actors and audiences, which, in turn, have led to new interrelationships between politics, the media and, frequently, religion.

These developments are giving rise to new forms of dedifferentiation and differentiation – hence a decline in the importance of old (in part ethnic) boundaries and new forms of differentiation, for example in the area of religion and class formation. The divisions between classes appear to have hardened over the last 50 years. The end of colonial rule and the early years of independence were a time of unparalleled social mobility. As relatively well educated Africans had wide-ranging opportunities to rapidly access influential and lucrative positions in the state administration and in the often state-embedded trade. In contrast, subsequent generations – which were increasingly well educated – face barriers to access such as far greater competition, economic crises, corruption etc.

Increasing transnationalization is a prominent signature of the post-1990 period. It is expressed in the growing number of African migrants outside the continent and in the spread and use of the media, development policy (in the form of new international development

24 The enormous success of mobile telephones in Africa can be explained, first, by the difficulties involved in obtaining a land line due to state control, ineffective authorities and underdeveloped networks. The development of the sector was promoted by the rare combination in Africa of market liberalization and regulation. Under the precondition of regulated competition between a number of suppliers, mobile telephones have low connection costs and conversation units as a product are almost infinitely divisible and thus also affordable for poor people. We would like to thank Helmut Asche for drawing our attention to this.

regimes), sport, and religious dynamics. The structural parallels to and participation in developments in the rest of the world are obvious. The history of Africa synchronized with the rest of the world to a clearly greater extent around 1990 than in 1960.

However, many of these developments have been in the offing since the end of the Second World War at the latest (on this point, see Nugent 2004: 58ff). At the time, educational parameters increased significantly for the first time, urbanization accelerated and new forms of modern African popular culture developed in the cities. This was the time of the emergence of a development regime that would shape Africa's relationship with the rest of the world to the present day, albeit also in a modified form. In relation to our question regarding the significance of 1960 for the next five decades, there are a number of factors that support the consideration of the late 1940s and the "glowing years" around 1990 (Nganang 2012) as more important turning points in twentieth century African history than 1960, the significance of which derives primarily from the perspective of the elites and outsiders.

Prospects and challenges: Has Africa's time now come?²⁵

Reviews and forecasts should be treated with caution – they can only ever be provisional. In the early 1960s, Ivorian President Houphouët-Boigny proposed a kind of wager to his Ghanaian colleague Nkrumah (Nugent 2004: 167 and footnote 100): they should take stock in ten years and see which development path had been more successful (i.e. Ghana's nationalistic approach or Côte d'Ivoire's more France-aligned one). From the perspective of the 1970s, there was no doubt about who had won: Côte d'Ivoire had experienced an 'economic miracle' while Ghana found itself in a severe economic and political crisis. However, today, Côte d'Ivoire has just emerged with great difficulty from a long-standing civil war with an uncertain outcome while Ghana is considered a model of economic and political development in West Africa.

Bierschenk and Spies (2012a) presents two scenarios for the future of Africa (Schäfer 2012; Lopes 2012, 2010) and one appeal (Nganang 2012). It is striking that a highly pessimistic perspective on Africa as was the rule among scientists specializing in Africa a few years ago is missing today.²⁶ The two scenarios formulated here refer primarily to economic development. One of them is more cautious: Schäfer refers to the fact that the deep structures of African economies scarcely changed after 1990 – a point we underlined in this introduction. The latest economic boom in Africa is primarily a raw materials boom. Many African countries will not attain the objective of halving the poverty rate by 2015 and the economic situation of the continent is still characterized by a high degree of economic fragmentation and isolation. The other scenario is extremely optimistic: Lopes sees new opportunities for Africa in shifts of power throughout the world in favour of the Global South. This optimism appears to us to primarily reflect an investors' perspective as also expressed in McKinsey's term the "African lion" (Roxburgh, Dörr, Leke et al. 2010) and that of "frontier markets" (De Aenlle 2012): business people, especially foreign ones, can currently earn large sums of money in many African countries. And *The Economist*, which referred to Africa around ten years ago as a "hopeless continent", sees Africa's rise as encapsulated in the fact that the richest "black per-

25 With this title we play on the very optimistic scenario recently outlined for the 21st century in Africa by the French development economists Severino and Ray (2010). Keith Hart has presented a similarly enthusiastic perspective in many lectures in recent years, for a written version, cf. Hart (2011).

26 Cf. Rimmer (1991). See also Nugent's very pessimistic closing chapter (2004: 434-489): the majority of the conflicts which he refers to, however, have been clearly alleviated in the meantime.

son" is no longer an African-American (i.e. Oprah Winfrey) but a Nigerian businessman, Alhaj Aliko Dangote.²⁷

These different expectations of the future are based not least on varying evaluations of the growing Asian – above all Chinese – presence in Africa. Africa is diversifying its economic and political partners: Schäfer sees this as both a risk and opportunity while Lopes welcomes it enthusiastically. Africa's trade with newly-industrialized and other developing countries slightly exceeded that with the European Union for the first time in 2008. Thus, in future, African countries will be less exclusively dependent on economic development in Europe and the USA, and may also be carried along by the new economic engines of China, South East Asia and India. This diversification of the partners only affects a few African countries, however. Thus, in this respect too, the continent continues to become more differentiated: from an economic perspective, for example, Niger, which has been one of the poorest countries in the world for years, has little in common with South Africa. And the range of products traded by African countries reflects a very traditional pattern: while the majority of Chinese exports to Africa are high-quality products, African countries mainly export raw materials like oil, cobalt and tropical timber. Thus the question as to whether more profound transformations and new development opportunities are in the pipeline or whether the economic dependence has merely diversified must remain open for the present. Does Africa's relationship with China involve new forms of South-South cooperation or is it more equivalent to the traditional colonial and post-colonial North-South pattern? (Asche and Schüller 2008; Asche 2010; Melber 2010; Taylor 2007).

The same ambivalence applies to social development. Africa's population is on the threshold of reaching the one billion mark and will double by 2050. If demographic dynamics remain the same, by then at the latest, there will be more Africans from sub-Saharan Africa than Indians or Chinese, and Nigeria will have the fifth largest population in the world (UN Population Division 2004). This is a challenge but it also creates opportunities: cities are generally loci of high productivity and they are the living space of developing middle classes. "Megacities offer our best chances," is the title given by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 25.11.2012 (No. 272, p. 14) to its interview with the author of the book "Arrival City" (Saunders 2010), which proclaims "successful rural exodus as the driver of all progress."

In addition, the youthfulness of the continent promises the opportunity of a "demographic return" (Bloom, Canning and Sevilla 2003), something that all economically successful countries have benefited from in the process of their development. These opportunities must be availed of, however. Thus, the greatest challenge facing African elites is, perhaps, steering the dynamism and creativity associated with this youthfulness into productive channels. The future of Africa will be decided by whether its young people become *Vanguards or Vandals* (title of a book by Abbink and Van Kessel 2005), *Makers or Breakers* (Honwana and Boeck 2005), or perhaps merely *hittistes*.²⁸

27 Africa Rising (2011). According to Forbes magazine of March 2015, Dangote is still the "richest black person" in the world. He is involved in trade and in cement and sugar production and he was one of the main sponsors of President Obasanjo of Nigeria's electoral campaign. The magazine could have also mentioned that businessmen can become presidents in Africa today, as exemplified by Marc Ravalomanana in Madagascar 2002-2009 (Hanke 2007). Ravalomanana's success appears to have been based on the successful combination of business community, religion and politics and the overlapping of his roles in these fields. Thus, these examples should not necessarily be viewed as reflecting the emancipation of the entrepreneurial class from politics but more, perhaps, as analogous to the role of Berlusconi in Italy.

28 The Algerian-Arab concept of the *hittistes* refers to young men who have only irregular employment and spend a large part of their time at street corners (furthermore, a phenomenon that was studied in American

Africa's development options can, perhaps, best be formulated in the form of paradoxes and contradictions. For example, there is the contradiction between a new emerging political and cultural dynamism and the perpetuation of deep economic structures that originate in part from the colonial period ("democratization without development", cf. Bierschenk 2009), the contradiction between the increasing global presence of Africans – in sport, popular culture, religion, trade and at foreign universities – and the continuing marginalization of African economies, between this transnationalization and stabilizing national identities. And, to name just two of the paradoxes, there is the proposition of a 'neo-liberal' development model by the development agencies to countries with few or no indigenous business communities, as well as the declining relative quantitative importance of development aid contrasted with an internationalizing development regime, which is increasingly developing in the direction of interventionism. The current outcome is a 'two-speed Africa' in which the persistence of deep economic structures and political interventionism are accompanied by incredible social and cultural dynamism.

The festivities organized in 2010 under the heading 50 Years of Independence offered all countries an opportunity to revisit the question as to how 'independent' Africa really is. This independence – for which Nganang (2012) pleads – must be first and foremost a discursive one. Beyond the hard macroeconomic indicators, this is where the greatest obstacle to Africa's development lies: up to today, most of the terms and approaches used in the debate about realistic development options – which could never be continent-wide but only country-related strategies – have not been developed by African authors but prescribed from outside. As Nganang shows, counter-tendencies now exist, however (Nganang 2012). And the real importance of the diversifying relationships between Africa and other countries of the global South may lie here: these relationships also allow for discursive opening because the exclusivity and dominance of western development models (as crystallized in the so-called Washington Consensus, for example) are questioned as a result. The question as to who will carry out this new quest for discursive independence remains open, however: whether it is the intellectuals in the narrow sense, to whom Gassama (2010) refers, or whether it can be the new urban middle classes in a broader sense remains to be seen (Gaus 2011). Whether these middle classes are merely a group defined by market research and primarily characterized by their purchasing power and a certain individualistic lifestyle, or whether they also pursue a binding societal project and supra-individual ideas about the future is a question that requires more research (cf. Neubert, Stoll 2015). What is certain, however, is that the real challenge in the attainment of "discursive sovereignty" is to ensure that the African *abiku countries* decide not to disappear again over the course of the next 50 years and to remain permanently (Nganang 2012).

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cities as far back as the 1930s, cf. Whyte 1943).

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