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Thomas Fillitz

Spatialising the field: Conceptualising fields and interconnections in the context of contemporary art of Africa

Whereas different anthropological notions (e.g. 'culture') have been subject to much reflection, Malinowski's formulation of fieldwork has for long passed into the non-debated 'archetype' of the discipline's tradition (see Gupta, Ferguson 1997a: 11ff). Even the reflexive period of the early 1970s, in which the social impact of conquest and colonial power on small-scale societies became a major focus (Hymes 1972; Asad 1973), did not change a lot to the taken-for-granted field of ethnographic research.

Most commonly, one may say, the 'field' came into the scope of anthropological reflection in the aftermath of the *Writing Culture* debates in 1986, as well as with the new focus on studies of globalization and later of transnationalism¹. Ethnographic research has moved from an assumption of small-scale, bounded societies and cultures to those other socio-cultural phenomena of movement or mobility, of cultural entanglements, of conflict, etc. Yet the field as site of fieldwork in some way remained a site far away from home, in which the anthropologist has face-to-face relationships with local people. But the site as such was not a subject of reflection and scholarly debate.

By the mid-1990s, several publications explicitly made the notion of the field their concern. Gupta and Ferguson question the conceptualisation of fieldwork practices within the present postcolonial world, and position, for my purpose, two main assumptions, namely that a 'location-work' is central in order to grasp various locations (cultural, economic, political, etc.). They further conceive that the "field sites in which contemporary anthropologists work are shaped by the geopolitics of the postcolonial, imperial world" (Gupta, Ferguson 1997a: 5, 10). In *Constructing the field*, Vered Amit invites to reconsider the idea of the distant field of ethnographic inquiry, which for long was a "gauge of ethnographic authenticity" (Amit 2000: 4). The contributors to her volume question this paradigm of the distant within new social realities, and rather emphasize the need to 'construct' the field of research. Amit concludes that « [...] the crucial issues that should concern us are the frameworks

which anthropologists and the various people they encounter in their fieldwork use to site their activities, their sense of self, their homes, their work and relationships» (Amit 2000: 16).

It was the achievement of Gupta and Ferguson, to reposition the topic of 'space' in anthropological theory. While they assert that space as a social construction is an anthropological truth², the authors question the notion of space first against an old, no more valid assumed isomorphism of space, place and culture, and reflect upon the imagination of space and place in "spatialized terms of a global capitalist economy" (Gupta, Ferguson 1997: 34, 39). It is their achievement to have clearly expressed that social change has to be viewed in the context of the specificity of the connections so produced:

For if one begins with the premise that spaces have *always* been hierarchically interconnected, instead of naturally disconnected, then cultural and social change becomes not a matter of cultural contact and articulation but one of rethinking difference *through* connection (Gupta, Ferguson 1997: 35; italics by the authors).

These re-conceptualisations of the notion of the field of ethnographic inquiry are all concerned with anthropology's endeavour to confront modernity, or better, the postcolonial world. Topics, which incite to carefully re-consider society, culture, but also locality or the state³, are mobility, cultural disjunctive flows, conflict, interconnections and networks, social fields, social, political, economical and cultural frames, etc.

I content, nevertheless, that there had been methodological approaches in the history of anthropology, which instigated to reflect about other theoretical approaches, in particular about the field, and which challenged the assumptions of bounded society and culture. I am referring on the one hand at attempts in considering the field in debating methods of comparison (see e.g. Holy 1987; Gingrich, Fox 2002). In particular, I have in mind concepts as for instance the one proposed by Fred Eggan with his 'controlled comparison'

(Eggan 1954), or Isaac Schapera's 'intensive regional comparison' (Schapera 1967), or the main styles of comparison discriminated by Ladislav Holy (1987). Although notions of society and culture are not challenged or rejected, these approaches nevertheless emphasize the need to define phenomena as well as their local and regional interconnections with other ones, in order to allow for comparison. In particular, Holy's distinction of two of these styles of comparison clearly shows the line towards the above mentioned new approaches in the context of modernity. I would like to mention the 'cross-cultural comparison' as a method to underline cultural difference in combination with those processes, which are constitutive for the production of meaning, and 'intra-cultural comparison' which deals with similarities and differences within a culture, i.e. considering culture no more as homogenous, but as heterogeneous (Holy 1987a).

While comparative methods were still embedded within generally assumed concepts of society or culture – only more recent approaches such as styles of 'distant comparison' on global phenomena do no more rely on them (see Gingrich, Fox 2002) –, concepts of society, culture, or structure got fundamentally critiqued by the Manchester School and replaced with methodological tools developed by Max Gluckman, Victor Turner, or Clyde Mitchell in southern Africa as members of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (see Gluckman 2008: 21). Interestingly and quite similar to studies of globalization and transnationalism, major themes of these researchers were mobility – social change, conflict, crisis, urban processes, the connection between tribal and urban life, labour migration, the production of social values, etc. (Kapferer 2008: 111).

The Manchester School strongly influenced the development of transactionalism, elaborated from the late 1950s on, with Fredrik Barth as main proponent, another being Bruce Kapferer (Barnard 2000: 82-84). Transactionalism rejects altogether notions of society and culture, and combines situational analysis and social networks (Kapferer 2008: 145). In Barth's words: "I see a need to recognize that what we have called societies are *disordered* systems, further characterized by an absence of closure" (Barth 1992: 21; italics by the author)⁴. He suggests instead focusing on the structure of social action, relations between social actors, their networks and behaviours.

Insofar as questions these scholars dealt with seem today of 'sharper relevance' within the framework of globalization (Kapferer 2008: 111), I shall briefly deal with the concepts of the situational and extended case analyses of the Manchester School in the first section of this contribution. In the oth-

er two, I would like to elaborate the notion of the field in two ways, as producing a 'mind-film' of the fieldwork, a metaphor similar to the one George Marcus uses when he speaks of the 'multi-sited research imaginative' (Marcus 1998: 3). Important concepts in such a 'film'-creation are the notions of 'art world' (Becker 1982), and of cosmopolitanization, an empirical, analytical cosmopolitanism, a perspective, which focuses on really existing global interdependencies (Beck, Sznaider 2006:10f). In the third section, I shall use different notions of field as analytical tools – specifically I shall consider the notion of Bourdieu (1992), Turner's concept of 'field-arena-social drama' (1974), and of 'contact zone' developed by Pratt (1992). The fieldwork I shall rely on is my (ongoing) research on the art biennial of Dakar, *Dak'Art*⁵.

The situational and extended case analyses

For Gluckman, "change is the very condition of human existence" (Kapferer 2008: 124f). Structural concepts of society or culture could not fulfil the demands of such an understanding of social life, and another methodology was needed. According to Gluckman, the event, or some particular phenomena, would be the central element for the anthropologist for an understanding and what he calls the following generalization – as exemplified in the famous article on the ceremonial opening of a new bridge in Zululand, on the basis of which Gluckman could illustrate "the extent to which Zulu and Whites were involved in a single system [...]"⁶.

According to Mitchell, a case analysis is "a detailed analysis of an event [...] which the analyst believes exhibits [...] the operation of some identified general theoretical principle" (Mitchell 2008: 27). Mitchell insists that a case analysis includes, or has as a fundamental feature the theoretical reflection, and does not stop with the (very) detailed description of the phenomenon, event, or series of events. Following Gluckman's own distinctions, Mitchell delineates three different types of case analysis, (a) the 'apt illustration', (b) the 'social situation', and (c) the 'extended case study'. The first is the description of some simpler event, in which a very general principle becomes visible, 'social situation' is for instance the ceremonial opening of the new bridge in Zululand, and the last one consists of events over a longer time frame, with the same social agents involved in different situation – where process as constitutive of social life may be best understood (Mitchell 2008: 28f)⁷. Gluckman and scholars of the Manchester School emphasize the importance of theoretical insights (generaliza-

tions), as it is only then that the change of social relations between individuals and groups, and the links between ideologically disconnected social systems may be clarified. “Where this method has been applied to monographs using the method of apt illustration, quite a different picture of a social system emerges – a more complex, less rigid, [...]” (Gluckman 2008: 17).

A brilliant example of the situational analysis is Mitchell’s famous study of the Kalela dance in the Copperbelt (1957). In this work, the author develops from the ritual in an urban setting the various spatial links, which were important for understanding the social change, which was articulated through this dance. Originally, the Kalela dance was a ritual of the Bisa, which was performed in praise of their territory, and their customs. In the urban environment, the dancers were dressed in European style, ridiculed in the so-called praise songs the urban social situations they were living in, and they were singing in Bemba language. In drawing the links from the dance to the urban social conditions, and to the rural localities, he succeeded to explain social change through the impact of the colonial system, and in relation to the complex implications of labour migration in the region. From such vantage points, Mitchell’s study was not centred on one locality, or a particular ethnic group. It rather focused on several social dynamics, and consisted in following the spatially spreading out of social relations, and connecting those fields which were of relevance for an in-depth understanding of the phenomena compressed and represented through the *Kalela* dance.

Mitchell further expanded the extended case analysis with the concept of ‘social network’, an actor centred concept, which he developed as another methodological tool for studying process (see also Kapferer 2008: 145). This concept concentrated on the mobility of social actors and their connections to other agents. In doing so, special social fields and their central social actors could be discriminated. For fieldwork this new method allowed to move away from the ‘archetype’ fieldwork as envisaged by Malinowski. There were no more pre-conceived social boundedness and taken for granted ideas of locality or society. According to Max Gluckman, these kinds of social analyses, situational and extended case analysis combined with the social-network approach, are those with whom process and social change may in fact be tackled, they may lead to imagining new concepts, and “[...] it may well be that we shall have to abandon the concept of society altogether, and speak of ‘social fields’ [...]” (Gluckman 2008: 20).

The production of the mind-film of the biennial of Dakar

In the course of working with contemporary artists in West Africa (Ivory Coast and Benin), I got interested in the biennial of Dakar, Dak’Art which had been founded in 1992 as exclusively space of visual arts. My first interest concerned the institution, its structure, its influence on the local art world, the different ways artists in Dakar were seeing it, its representation(s) in the public space. My friendship with an artist, who had created the logo of the biennial, would enable me the access, and I had received a letter of the Secretary of the biennial, who showed great interest in my research project. At the beginning 2008, I prepared my first fieldwork, which would be well before the opening of the mega-event, and started imagining the field. One ‘field’ consisted of visual artists in Dakar, another one was the secretariat of the biennial and the various committees, their tasks, how and by whom they are constituted, how they operate, how they are linked to each other. Another field would be the exhibition space itself, but that one could be studied only with my second fieldwork period (late May-June) during the biennial event.

During my first fieldwork (February and early March), I heard, first, that the venue was not guaranteed, as the government had yet not allocated the budget. It was a time of crisis, of ‘crisis-meetings’, and the main question I was confronted with, was how to enable the biennial of 2008, what could be the venue’s format under these circumstances. I focused mostly on meetings of artists who were in favour of the biennial, and who debated what they could contribute to its realisation.

The collection of information in this period helped me improve the complexity of the fieldwork-mind-film. Regarding the artists and their views, I conceived their field as differentiated in those who were in favour of the biennial, and others, who were more or less opposing this event, but their common vision was an improving of interaction with homologues from other local art worlds. The space of exhibition got pluralised: what was called Dak’Art-In consists of three exhibition areas, the *exposition internationale*, the *exposition individuelle* (could also be a group exhibition), the *salon du design* (abrogated by 2010), and an open space, Dak’Art-Off (since 2000) – open for anybody who wishes to exhibit in places within Dakar, but which I could not imaginatively grasp at this early phase. I moreover was seeing the field between the intentions and actions of the government facing those of the biennial’s institutions (secretariat, and the committees of orientation and selection), and in-

ternational critics, which partly were taken up into government discourses on the biennial.

One central aspect of this imagination of the mind-film is the so far outlined splitting of the overall field of research. The biennial therein appears as a relatively complex of fields and their respective interconnections, often characterised by tension. Another aspect is the consideration of the biennial as global event. What is the meaning of such a conceptualisation, what are its implications for fieldwork?

The format of the art biennial was introduced in the art world in 1895 with the foundation of the *Biennale di Venezia*, but only after World War-2 followed the next ones, in 1951 São Paulo, in 1955 *documenta* in Kassel/Germany, nowadays the proclaimed most important global art show of the global art world. The years after 1984, however, changed this map of global art with the spreading of art biennials in many countries of the South, 1984 the *Bienal de la Havana*, the one of Cairo, etc. Suddenly, a greater awareness and visibility of the creation of contemporary art in different regional art worlds was produced.

Dak'Art was not an isolated phenomenon and the specificity of this locally situated global event has to be seen within this global framework. This implied the conception of two perspectives inscribed within research: (a) a regional focus on the production of the image and meaning of 'contemporary art of Africa', as the event is since 1996 the *Biennale de l'art contemporain Africain*; (b) how is the global dimension realised from such a situational positioning, is it specific or is it a mere copy of the model first developed in Europe?

The concepts, I applied to adequately conceive these research trajectories was first the method of 'cosmopolitanization', a focus on real existing global, socio-cultural interconnections, a 'globalization from within' (Beck 2002: 17; italics by the author). I drew specifically on Hannerz' concept of 'global culture': it constitutes a global network of an institutional format (art biennials), and corresponds to diversity as organisation of difference (Hannerz 1990: 237). In this global culture, difference is not created or organised from a centre, diversity is the product of power relations between the global art world and regional ones, where the institutions in the North are those which define the subject matter global art (above all *documenta*), and those in the South have to prove their particularity accordingly. Art biennials in the South have to produce their local uniqueness, as for instance with the representation of contemporary art of Africa for Dak'Art, and via such a positioning, they have to produce the interconnections to the global culture – i.e. to prove

their global horizon and particularity.

This double perspective corresponds to what George Marcus has called as 'strategically situated (single-site) ethnography' in the context of his reflections about 'multi-sited ethnography' in the postcolonial world. It is another strategy to the 'following' of people, things, knowledges, etc. It focuses precisely on how local subjects produce in which way ever the specific, concrete global horizon.

This strategically situated ethnography might be thought of as a foreshortened multi-sited project and should be distinguished from the single-site ethnography that examines its local subjects' articulations primarily as subaltern to a dominating capitalist or colonial system (Marcus 1998: 95).

Having imaged my field on the particularity of Dak'Art, I consequently now aimed at detecting the sites where the global dimension could be articulated. These were the members of the selection committee, their selection criteria, their gazes on works of art, the exhibitions, individuals from the global art world like gallery dealers, critics, collectors, curators, other art specialists, parts of the public, the networks of artists, sponsors, each exhibition space, and the overall structuration of the biennial.

With my second fieldwork period, it became obvious that the kind of investigation I was involved in requested an intense concentration on the venue as such, i.e. the first week of this art event⁸. During this period nearly all important things happen, the opening of the biennial, openings in the Dak'Art-Off space, conferences and debates (the *Rencontres* slot), receptions. Everybody who is not from the larger Dakar area is there, the selection committee, the invited artists, gallery dealers, curators, the international audience, etc. To understand the biennial, one has to experience the dynamics during this week, and much information can only be generated in this time – this is another meaning of the notion of 'global event'.

A final amending of the fieldwork-mind-film needed to be done for the following periods of fieldwork, namely a closer gaze on the local art market and its relations to the biennial, i.e. galleries and collectors – individuals and institutions. I had realised that gallery dealers and collectors were actually involved in either of the two committees, the question of their impact on decision-making became obvious. Moreover, the importance of the biennial for the career of artists and the situation of art institutions in this local art world requested an elucidation of the possibilities for visibility of contemporary art, the conditions for knowledge exchange and debates, as well as the opportunities

for selling. In these spaces too, the international or global dimension could be scrutinised.

While 'constructing the field', using Amit's characteristic book title (2000), I nevertheless did in no way conceive any closed or bounded spatial entity. The field of the biennial of Dakar rather turned out as a body of complex networks centred on this global event, but with transnational connections into art worlds in Africa, and global ones into the global art world. The metaphor of the mind-film as I presented it is process oriented, insofar as the imaginary, and consequently its practices, change and evolve during fieldwork. A cornerstone of this process is the reflexive stance, which allows to acknowledge new trajectories, which emerge through the relationship with interlocutors and the immersion in the field, and to select those to be followed. The field thus becomes diversified, as for instance there are the networks between local artists and incoming international ones with their respective intentions for wider visibility, exchange, and networking; there is the field constituted by the spaces of exhibition, which, moreover, stretches out into different cultural fields of artistic production, or the cultural, political, and economical field constituted by the relationship between the state, the biennial, and international critiques⁹.

Fields as analytical categories

The field(s) as conceived for fieldwork are also linked to concepts of the field, which relate to the analysis of empirical ethnographic data in the context of the 'strategically situated (single-site) ethnography'¹⁰. In the context of my research, and in order to tackle the different qualities of networks I have to deal with, I decided to apply three different concepts, the one of the field as outlined by Bourdieu (1992), Turner's definition of 'arena' (1974), and the one of 'contact zone' proposed by Pratt (1992).

Pierre Bourdieu organised his study of the situation of literature and authors in Paris of the nineteenth century around his notion of the field. Broadly speaking, the literary field was constituted by young authors, who had to live from their artistic production, and who, in that situation developed an art to live (*un art de vivre – le style bohème*; Bourdieu 1992: 79ff). This style of living was further connected to the famous *salons*, and the apparition of journals and specialised publishers. A field, according to Bourdieu, designates a theoretical attitude, where each institution creates its own truths within the system of objective relations, which are constitutive of the space they form with all others

(Bourdieu 1992: 254). Three aspects are fundamental for conceiving such a field: (a) a relational thinking; (b) reflexivity, and (c) the geographical unit (Bourdieu 1992: 255f). Accordingly, each field develops its own particularities and creates interactions with others; reflexivity consists in producing the space of the possible viewpoints (on the literary fact); and the geographical unit considers the community of intellectuals as sharing common spaces of debate (the salons, the journals, etc.).

The different networks I referred to above may, firstly, be considered as such fields close to Bourdieu's meaning. I view the field of artists as the one within which various positions are expressed – artists who see an huge opportunity in the biennial, although those who fought for a biennial from the mid-1980s on consider their intention of a wide international space of debate and interaction with artists from wherever as having been stolen and degraded by the government into a narrower space on contemporary art of Africa. Others express within the present cultural conditions the possibilities the biennial confers, namely a transnational visibility of their achievements, the forms of interaction and of knowledge exchange, the possibility of widening their career and intensifying their work with exhibitions in other regions of African art worlds, respectively in the European-North American art world. The majority of invited artist share this perception. They emphasize the dimension of learning what is going on in other places, and the importance of exchanging with their homologues from different places. There are, nevertheless, others too, who consider the biennial quite useless for their work and the production of their career in the global art world.

The interactions between the intentions of the biennial institutions and the government of Senegal constitute another field. The biennial was founded under President Abdou Diouf to create an international platform for the visual arts of Senegal. Dak'Art is well inscribed within a state ideology, shared by the biennial institutions: it consolidates the metaphors of Dakar as a crossroad of cultures, and of the biennial as representation of the cultural politics in Senegal. The biennial institutions further emphasize that it is fundamental for the development of the local art world, specifically of more galleries of contemporary art, more collectors, of improving the career trajectories of local artists, and of improving the knowledge about visual arts as cultural among the local population. Above all, the biennial insists that it is the showcase of contemporary art of Africa and its Diaspora for the global art world. If one intends to get informed about contemporary expressions of these arts, one has to

come to Dakar.

This field is also one of tensions. The various governments so far ignored claims for more autonomy of the biennial. Major consequences are the late allocation of state budgets for the venues, and the state's control of sponsoring and of decision-making. It hinders the biennial to create its own, more flexible structures, and mostly a long-term planning of the following biennial venues. In order to reduce the status of the biennial for the local art world, government discourses also have appropriated international critique, which question local impacts, or its connection to the local public space. An argument I often was confronted to was why provide financial means for an institution, which does not fulfil its socio-cultural task?

Tensions within a field, however, may progress into struggles or crises, for which I consider Bourdieu's so-defined notion not enough dynamic. For the biennial venue of 2010, the tensions between the government and the biennial grew into an open friction. Nearly everybody in the local art world, be it journalists, gallery dealers, specialists, or artists knew about it. The clash was articulated in an ideological opposition. The then President of the Republic, maître Abdoulaye Wade, favoured another project of a mega-event, the 'Third Festival of World Black Artists', this festival of all arts was realised from December 10-31, 2010. If the biennial should survive, it should be included within this other format. Dak'Art actually favoured for its venue the concept of 'Afropolitanism' as proposed by Achille Mbembe. The author suggests a transnational approach for cultural politics in Africa, insisting on the historic and recent importance of mobility within Africa and its outward trajectories (2009: 19).

In order to cope with such open conflicts, I rely on Turner's concept of the 'arena' which is part of his wider concept of 'field-arena-social drama'. This is a concept related to the extended case analyses, and Turner applied it in his study of Ndembu society. According to the author, fields are "abstract cultural domains where paradigms are formulated, established, and come into conflict" (Turner 1974: 17), whereas "*an arena is a framework – ... – which manifestly functions as a setting for antagonistic interaction aimed at arriving at a publicly recognized decision*" (*ibid.* 133; italics by the author), and 'social drama' is the ritual of the contestation, which he phases according to van Gennep's rites de passage (*ibid.* 37f).

For sure, the conflict between the project of the government and the intention of the biennial did not allow for a setting of the antagonism. The power relations are manifest, and as a subsumed state

institution, the biennial's officials could not publicly address and activate the conflict. But the biennial was the place where it was enacted, and influential people of the local art world participated in the debate, and expressed their opinion in favour of the biennial. I nevertheless use the notion of arena for this kind of change within that field, as the so-articulated frictions questioned the existence and continuity of this mega-event, and were at this time characteristic for the social interactions. Due to this paradigmatic conflict, this specific venue suffered budget cuts, which heavily affected the biennial's programme, and in a global dimension the biennial's place within the global culture of art biennials.

Another space, where I felt the concept of field had to be complemented by another one, is the field of the exhibition spaces. All of them are subject to different logics. Dak'Art-In is the space of the international exhibition, and the so-called 'solo exhibition'. For the former space, the biennial's office and committee of orientation decide of an overall topic, and the selection committee decides of the works of art to be exhibited. For the latter, a curator or a team of curators choose an artist or a group of artists in agreement with the biennial's office and committee of orientation. Moreover, artists of the 'international exhibition' have to have a citizenship of an African state, wherever they live. Another dimension of this space is not so apparent from the outset. The artists represented come from different local art worlds in Africa, Europe, or elsewhere. Their themes, strategies, and relations to other works of art are therefore not a given, or put in other words, what is connected through this space might be quite disconnected in the everyday artistic creation – what are the connections so construed? Regarding the 'solo-exhibition', artists may be from whichever art world, independently of any citizenship criterion or reflection of African Diaspora. It may be a focus into the global art world, it may be a form of obeisance in front of the achievement of an individual artists.

Dak'Art-Off is a space of exhibition open to anybody who feels to exhibit. The biennial only coordinates the catalogue of the various venues, when and where they take place. Dak'Art-Off has also a strong diverse and popular basis. This is due to the spreading of the 'Off' into the districts of the city, and in the mean time into locations in the neighbourhoods of Dakar, and expanding even to St. Louis, the former colonial capital. Some of the exhibitions may be curated, others are the product of individual artistic interests, of individuals from the local art world. One finds multiple expressions of contemporary art of Africa, congruent with multiple cultural spaces in Africa, and/or shows of art-

ists from abroad. How to cope with the differences between these three exhibition spaces, and with the dynamics between the works of art on display in each of them, in particular in respect to the 'international exhibition' and Dak'Art-Off?

I selected the notion of 'contact zone', which was developed by Marie Louise Pratt for her analyses of travel writing in the context of exploration and colonial conquest. Pratt brings into scope a feature of this notion, the one of relationality, which was decisive for my choice: "A 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other, [...] in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices" (Pratt 1992: 7). Leaving the colonial power relations apart, this notion of 'contact zone' suits insofar, as it brings to the foreground the specific character of the combinations, which are at stake in the exhibition spaces, and not only leaving them at the level of a neutral encounter or positioning side-by-side of works of art. This field of the exhibition spaces is central, as it is the one the public, and international critics experience, and it is through these experiences that Dak'Art may appear and claim its position as a postcolonial cultural contact zone in the making, i.e. by showing its specific counter-hegemonic and counter-normative horizons (Enwezor 2002: 56, 59). These strategies are defining its position in, and its entanglement with the global culture of biennials.

Conclusion

In this contribution, I started by questioning the field approach as uniquely related to studies of globalization and transnationalism. Although still remaining within older concepts of culture and society, some methods of comparison forced researchers to think about the units to be compared, thus to define fields of phenomena. The methods of situational and extended case analyses of the Manchester School, however, have turned our attention to reflect about these central notions of anthropology. In combination with actor centred networks it became manifest that categories of society or culture may not be adequate for the study of social processes anthropology deals with, that such analyses were to be bounded and enclosed in rigidity. Instead, it may be better to focus on social fields, a methodology, which was more radically developed by transactionalism. Interestingly, these two methodological directions focused on similar topics as globalization and transnationalism studies, on change, mobility, conflict, and connection, only at different scales. Yet, by the mid-1980s the conceptualising

of fieldwork itself became a topic of reflection in overall anthropology. Notions of location, community, neighbourhood were reflected upon, and by the 1990s new concepts of place and space became a focus of scholarly discussion.

In line with such debates, I opted for discriminating between two major categories of the field. The first is connected to fieldwork, and raises questions about the need to elaborate this field, as it is done in several studies (e.g. Gupta, Ferguson 1997, Amit 2000). I use the metaphor of the 'mind-film', close to Marcus' notion of the 'multi-sited research imaginative' (Marcus 1998: 3), for clarifying what one intends to do during fieldwork, on which aspects of the socio-cultural phenomenon to be studied one wishes to focus on. This 'mind-film', however, is not produced at once. Although I started my research on the art biennial of Dakar with Becker's concept of 'art world', this 'mind-film' constitutes a process, which gets more complex in the course of fieldwork itself. The immersion into the field, as well as all kinds of interactions with interlocutors open up new trajectories the researcher faces, and has to decide which ones should be followed, which ones may be left aside. Moreover, questions of a 'strategically situated (single-site) ethnography' demand at this very stage concrete sensibilities for a multi perspectival approach, i.e. connecting the local and the global, but instead of the old local :: global binarism, I opt for Beck and Sznaider's concept of 'cosmopolitanization' (Beck, Sznaider 2006).

The second notion of the field is an analytical one, which I faced while dealing with the ethnographic data and questions of representation. One may argue that such concepts are relevant already in the conceptualisation of fieldwork, this may be true for multi-sited research and the imagination of transnational field, or (land)-scapes. In the context of a 'strategically situated (single-site) ethnography', however, I content that such concepts of field are subject to the social situations one faces in fieldwork, how such fields and their internal interactions get 'seen'. I aimed at showing that there are various notions at hand, and the researcher needs to specify for which reasons, and which purposes one or another fits best. In this last part of my contribution, and within the framework of my research on the art biennial of Dakar, I argued for a complementary use of notions of field (Bourdieu 1992), arena (Turner 1974), and contact zone (Pratt 1992), according to the character of the relationality of the socio-cultural interactions.

Notes

¹ See e.g. the (land)-scapes of Appadurai in the context of his 'global cultural economy' and its disjunctive cultural flows (1990), or the 'transnational social fields' of Glick-Schiller relating to 'methodological transnationalism' (2004).

² In the context of small-scale societies, Hirsch and O'Hanlon have dealt with the 'anthropology of landscape' (1992), i.e. how a certain landscape was imbued with different meanings for different social purposes (e.g. the change between hunting and agricultural landscapes).

³ For considerations of locality, neighbourhood, and community see for instance Appadurai 1995, Amit 2002; for considerations of the heterogeneity and the spatialisation of the state see, e.g. Appiah 1994, Ferguson, Gupta 2002, Gupta, Sharma 2006.

⁴ For a discussion of the notion of culture, see Barth 1989.

⁵ I am grateful to the *Biennale de l'art contemporain Africain*, Dak'Art, for enabling and kindly supporting this research.

⁶ Gluckman 2008: 16. He had presented this paper in 1959, and argues for the extended case analysis as against functionalist-structuralist methods. The paper on the ceremonial of the opening of a new bridge, cf. M. Gluckman, 1958, *The Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand*, Rhodes-Livingstone Paper n. 28, Manchester, Manchester University Press for Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.

⁷ Mitchell further mentions a work of Eckstein, who differentiates between five categories of case analysis (see Mitchell 2008: 30f). What seems of utmost importance in Mitchell's argument, however, is the central role, which theoretical explanations and insights have in the context of the ethnographic description of an event, or a series of events.

⁸ The biennial runs a full month, the special exhibitions in the Off-space vary in duration, but all openings cluster around the first week after the opening of the event.

⁹ The biennial is bounded and subsumed under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

¹⁰ Intending to do multi-sited fieldwork, concepts of fields such as the (land)-scapes of Appadurai (1990), or the 'transnational social fields' of Glick, Schiller (2004) have to be conceived methodologically within the 'mind-film' of fieldwork.

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