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Mobility, political insecurity and
the formation of identities (displacement cultures):
A comparison of three areas of conflict in Africa

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Abstract:

The displacement of people is a feature of (civil) war and political repression. Political constellations may lead to a general situation of (political) insecurity as well as to uncertainties in people's daily lives. Such insecurity and uncertainty may result in mobility and immobility. The duration of conflict and repression is a factor in the histories of societies and has consequences for its social fabric. These conflicts can mean a complete social rupture but in situations where wars have been going on for decades and political repression is a daily reality, these experiences have a different meaning and may come to belong to a repertoire of society that can be considered as a mobile or migration society, where relationships with situations of insecurity and mobility are expressed in notions of belonging, home and identity. This paper presents a comparative analysis from different conflict areas in Africa (Angola/Namibia and Francophone Central Africa) to illustrate how political insecurities inform feelings of security (ontological and social) that relate to mobility. These can be captured in the term 'displacement culture'. The case studies differ in the duration of the conflict and the forms of repression. The social histories and anthropologies of these societies in Chad, Angola and Cameroon, which should be understood in a history of political insecurity, show how societies have appropriated these situations in their notions of belonging, home and thus identities, but in a variety of different ways.

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Introduction

We started working on the relationship between society and conflict and political insecurity in the late 1990s. Conflicts were then rampant in many African societies and studies focused on rupture, people fleeing and the breakdown of society. Terrible things happen during wars and serious conflicts and societies and individuals are deeply affected by the consequences. Returning to the same sites every year where there was or had been conflict, although not always of the same intensity but certainly lasting, we realized that despite all the atrocities and problems, people's lives continue there. They carve out a living within the dynamics that the conflict created around them in a situation induced by continuous political insecurity. Conflicts are considered as a process, as part of social processes that shape a society (see Richards 2005, Cramer 2006). In this paper we want to investigate political insecurities that are related to these conflicts and repressive regimes, either by governments or rebel groups. These political insecurities are social processes as well and can be

deconstructed in the dynamics of rebellion, of opposition parties, of repression or in opposite forces, i.e. religion, ethnicity. These lead to societal processes like forms of mobility and movement, feelings of insecurity and a redefinition of identities. Thus the social dynamics that are related to political insecurities inform society and individuals in the reorganization of social structures, of life, of identities. The study of identity has been dominating a part of social studies for a long time. It is clear that identity is both a process informed by people's decisions (agency) but also chosen within the boundaries of societies and circumstances that are of a economic, social and political nature (i.e. Cerulo 1997). When facing political insecurity, people are often confronted with acute situations where they feel the need to deny their old identity (ethnicity or national identity) or they can feel under pressure to adopt another identity that could protect them. Another transformation is expected in geography. Conflicts force people to engage in new mobilities, i.e. refugees, displacements, entering new geographical and social spaces, in which their social networks may change profoundly. In all cases, political insecurity and the dynamics it reveals have become part and parcel of daily life. In this paper we try to understand this process of identity formation and mobility as it is related to the dynamics of political insecurity for Hadjerai society in Central Chad, the people in the border zone between Angola and Namibia, and Fulani nomads in the CAR and Cameroon. These societies/communities are all being confronted with political insecurity that is either related to long periods of conflict and post-conflict situations, or to criminality as a consequence of conflict in other areas. For each, we first sketch the dynamics of political insecurity as far as our research revealed them and in the last section we try to understand the dynamics of political insecurity and changes in society that we have observed in order to understand political insecurity as a social process.

Case Studies

Case study: Chad

Enduring 40 years of civil war – the Hadjerai from the Guera in central Chad

Chad's civil war started in 1965 and has not yet ended. Recent attacks on N'Djamena in 2008 and 2009 confirm this. Analysis of the war indicates that central Chad, the Guera, is the region where war started in 1965 with a peasant revolt.¹ Living in this mountainous area, the Hadjerai have seen the various phases of the civil war in its different forms in their region. The civil war, which started as a protest by the north/eastern parts of Chad against the southern government soon turned into a chaotic war with various rebel fractions fighting each other and the government. Successive rebel leaders found their way to the presidency. The Hadjerai have been involved in the war in its different phases and factions; from being part of the start of the civil war in 1965 to being soldiers in the army of one of the former rebel leaders, who in turn defined them as his opponents. The Hadjerai as a group have always been caught betwixt and between the dynamics of the conflict. For them, the civil war has always meant (political) insecurity, making survival in the area difficult. Finally it turned the social fabric of the Hadjerai from an apparently sedentary people into a mobile people whose social and group (religious) identity follows the whims of their oppressors, but at the same time unites them as one people.

¹ Chad's civil war has been extensively documented by R. Buijtenhuijs (1978, 1987); See also De Bruijn & Van Dijk (2007) for a reconstruction of the war and its effects on the Guera in Central Chad.

How do political insecurities translate into social opposition, opposite forces in Chadian society to which the Hadjerai were forced to react? First of all, the instability in political terms and the factions to which some Hadjerai related forced many Hadjerai men to move. They decided to move their houses to other sites so that they were invisible to the parties looking for them. Political insecurity and its interpretation led to new patterns of mobility. Another dynamic was introduced when the rebel movement made its religious preference clear to the population, and they had to become Muslim and abandon 'modernity' (in the form of schooling and education) (cf. De Bruijn & Van Dijk 1997, Khalil 2008). Another opposition was created in ethnic terms.

The following periods can be distinguished regarding the changing dynamics:
1965-1980: The Hadjerai were caught between the Frolinat (le Front national pour la liberation du Tchad) and the government, that had the DDS (the secret police) as its secret executive power. The farmers, citizens that were the Hadjerai, were accused by one or the other and had to manoeuvre in this political opposition that evolved amid extensive violence directed at them. One of the oppositions they had to handle was the religious opposition between Islam and Christianity or the Hadjerai belief of the Margai cult. Frolinat had an ideology of anti-modernisation and islamization. They saw the Hadjerai as rebelling against this as they had turned massively to Christianity or they kept to their Margai beliefs. The Frolinat considered both as being in opposition to them.

1980-1990: In this period the situation in central Chad became more complex. The government lost all control and different rebellion groups became active in the area. The various factions were divided along ethnic lines and a new opposition was created between Arabs and non-Arabs (i.e. Hadjerai). The Arabs in central Chad were in power for a few years before Hisseine Habre took power in 1982. Although the Hadjerai had supported him in his efforts to gain power, he dismissed them, after they established their own political movement (MOSANAT, (Mouvement de Salut National du Tchad)), and tried to destroy the Hadjerai who he considered as his opponents and established the secret police, the DDS (Direction de la Documentation et de la Sécurité, la police politique) and the SP (Sécurité Présidentielle, la garde prétorienne).

1991-present: Deby introduced democracy in this period but atrocities continued at the same time. Deby, a warlord under Hissein Habre, considered the Hadjerai as his enemies and tried to destroy them. The Hadjerai organised a rebellion against him. The early 1990s was marked by regular razzias/massacres of the Hadjerai, also in N'Djamena. In 2008 central Chad again saw civil war and the rebels occupied Mongo, the capital of central Chad, and they attacked N'Djamena. The Hadjerai were torn once again between government and rebel forces.

To live with or despite such oppositions and keep to one's own self, the Hadjerai were forced to move regularly, to adopt another religion in some cases, and to dance to the whims of those who happened to be ruling them.

One of the most remarkable developments is the way the population of the Guera dispersed. To avoid the government atrocities or the rebels many, especially (prosecuted) men, were forced to move and live elsewhere. The recent attacks in 2008 in which Hadjerai were both involved in the rebellion and as soldiers led to young

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men in particular leaving Chad for Sudan. These mobilities have become normal for the Hadjerai. Not only are there individual displacements but also collectivities that moved, i.e. whole villages, camps that had to move because of the strategy of *terre brulees*, which was employed by government forces. They forced the villagers to the urban peripheries where they could not be exploited (for food etc.) by the rebels. Villagers and families decide to live in separate quarters to avoid exploitation by rebels or attacks by the government forces. All these mobilities affected people's lives and turned the Hadjerai into a people of wanderers, dispersed over a vast area from Sudan to Nigeria.

The two life histories that follow show how the oppositions that were dynamized in the process of political insecurity in the area have shaped the lives of families in central Chad.

Mobility history of the Nandjeloum family

The insecurity-related mobility history of the Nandjeloum family starts in the 1960s. One day in the winter of 1969 a group of six Arab-speaking men with two guns enter the village of Somo in Central Chad (in the western Guera). They called the villagers together and explained their ideology against the Sara who were then the ruling ethnic group from the south of Chad. They asked the villagers for food and drinks, which was duly offered out of fear. Nevertheless this act was reported to the military authorities who assumed these were Frolinat rebels, and four days after the group passed through the village, the (government) military encircled the village during the night. In the morning the villagers discovered the soldiers who ordered the local men to report to the central area in the village. The village was burnt down and the men were killed. A year later, the village was heavily taxed by the canton chief who again arrived with military forces. This resulted in a reaction by the rebels who were still in the bush and came out to fight the men in the village and again burned the village, as a measure of revenge as they assumed the village was on the side of the government.

To avoid a similar situation happening again, Nandjeloum and his brothers decided to move to Bedemé, a village 15 km from Somo. They built houses there, hoping to be free from attack. They only live in relative peace for nine months. On a day in the rainy season when they were working the field, government forces came to their village and set the houses on fire, killed one of the brothers and took his family hostage. To liberate the family, Nandjeloum met the authorities who then accused him and his brothers of serving the rebels by offering them places to hide. He, in turn, was tortured and imprisoned in Mongo, the capital of Central Chad, where he stayed for four years. When he left prison he decided not to return to Somo but settled instead in Gama in the western part of Chad (Chari Baguirmi). His eldest son in the meantime tried to escape this violence and went to Banala a village, 50 km from Somo.

In 2004, Nandjeloum was an old man and was constantly thinking about the terrible things that happened to him in his earlier years. Nevertheless he decided to return to go back to his village to die at the hands of either the rebels or government troops:

*"Je sais que maintenant mes jours sont comptés et donc
je préfère repartir au village mourir dans les mains de*

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rebelles ou des forces gouvernementales. Peut être cela peut servir à quelque chose"

He got married when he was living in Chari-Baguirmi and had two children. They have no idea what central Chad is like and because they only heard the bad stories their father told them, they do not want to go to the village of Somo. As Nandjemoum said in relation to the refusal of his family to come with him:

"Leur maman dit qu'elle préfère voir ses enfants grandir tous devant elle et se marier devant elle en sécurité à Gama, plutôt que de les voir dispersés par les guerres du Guéra comme la famille de leur papa"

His son who settled in Banala took the paradoxical decision following the murder of his uncle to join the army. During his period in the army he decided to live in Mongo where he wants to stay for the rest of his life.

Mobility history of the Bedjaki family

Bedjaki and his family lived in the village of Mataya, 15 km from Bitkine, the second largest town in Central Chad and the Guera. In 1980 civil war broke out again and this time involved the whole of Chad. Central government forces disappeared from Central Chad and the armed bands from the FAP (Forces Armées populaires) and the CDR (Conseil Démocratique Révolutionnaire) took over. The CDR is the pro-Arab political-military movement whereas the Hadjerai are in majority supporting the FAN (Forces Armées du Nord). This situation has led to a clear change in relations between these two ethnic groups. The Arabs clearly took the position of being superior and considered the Hadjerai as inferior. The Hadjerai had to adopt a low profile, which was not easy as the Arabs often provoked them.

"Les noirs Hadjarai serviront bientôt de charbon du thé pour les Arabes et leurs champs de pâturage aux bœufs des Arabes"

These acts of provocation were not limited to words alone but were translated into actions, as happened to Bedjaki in his field. A cattle herd belonging to Arabs trampled his field when he was present. He demanded an explanation, to which the Arab answered in a humiliating way:

"Nouba², éloignes-toi si tu veux avoir la vie sauve. Estime-toi heureux que les bœufs des arabes t'honorent en mangeant ton mil".

Hurt, Bedjaki decided to take justice into his own hands. He fought the herdsman and knocked him out. The next morning three armed man from the CDR came to the village and beat Bedjaki up, left him in the sun and fined him FCFA 300,000, 10 *pains de sucre*, and 5 *coros*³ of tea. To free him, his parents advanced him FCFA

² This is a term used by the Arabs to indicate the black Africans, i.e. non-Arabs.

³ This is a cup to measure grain that contains about 1 kg.

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125,000, 7 *pains du sucre* and 2 *coros* of tea and negotiated paying the rest of the amount later. Bedjaki would never have been able to pay this amount and decided to flee towards the west, to Bokoro. His absence was noted by the Arabs who then decided to make a complaint against his brothers, Offi and Soussa, with the CDR who were ruling the village. They then took two of his brothers and threatened them with execution if they did not pay the rest of the fine. They fined the brothers extra for not reporting the flight of their brother. So the two brothers had to pay FCFA 400,000 and 3 *pains de sucre*.

Offi felt deeply humiliated and decided to join the other party, FAN, as so many Hadjerai had done before him. This was also overheard by the people from the CDR. They turned their anger now on Soussa, the other brother, who was still in the village, and summoned him to pay another fine, this time to allow his brother to be a member of FAN. The brother resisted and asked them to kill him instead of continuously torturing him. The CDR elements beat him up and emptied his granaries. Soussa decided to leave the village too and went to Chari Baguirmi where he stayed until 1998 when he returned to his village.

Case study: Cameroon

From Fulani herders to refugees along the Cameroon-CAR border: A conflict of identity

The Chad conflict has had regional effects and led to extensive political insecurity. Chadian soldiers who helped to put Bozize, the current CAR president, in power in 2003 have stayed in the northern parts of the country and are organized in armed bands. This has created a situation of violence and insecurity for the people in northern CAR that made them flee the country and go to the UNHCR camps in southern Chad and in the Adamaoua region of Cameroon. After my (Adamou) first attempts to understand the situation in the camps in Cameroon I realized that most of the refugees from CAR in these camps are Fulani-Mbororo, whose cattle have been stolen and whose children have been taken hostage by these bandits.

The Mbororo are nomadic Fulani, known for their itinerant lifestyle. They come from Nigeria and have over the decades moved into Cameroon, Chad and recently also into the CAR. The reason for going to the CAR has also been the civil war in Chad which led to problems finding shelter for themselves and their animals. The Mbororo and the nomadic Fulani traditionally flee conflict situations (cf. Iliffe 1987). Other reasons to move on are ecological reasons, i.e. drought. In most cases the Mbororo are considered a minority and strangers. Their itinerant life is an essential part of their culture as they have a travelling culture (De Bruijn 2007). However, their history is coloured by immobility too. The impoverishment of nomads often went with their forced sedentarization and for some nomads this has become a permanent situation but others returned as soon as possible to their nomadic lifestyle. For many nomads it is difficult to accept a sedentary lifestyle as it even influences their feelings of being, it destroys their well-being. Those who maintain a sedentary lifestyle however adapt with time to the new situation, and change their ideas about well being and identity.

Thus political instability has always created a dynamic of mobility for nomadic groups. Their basic reaction was to flee, with their cattle. The case that is presented in

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this section is one of forced immobility of nomads, with the external factor of international aid, i.e. the establishing of a refugee camp. How does this situation influence first the mobility of the nomads and second their feelings of self and identity/ Below we examine the situation of the refugees from the CAR in Meidougou-Meiganga Division in the Adamaoua region of Cameroon in more detail.

The Mbororo I met in the camps were often deprived of their animals that had been stolen by roaming bandits in northern areas. This meant a loss of self-respect and a dependence on aid. They have to wait for UNHCR personnel in the camp to deliver food, clothes and soap. This left them feeling humiliated, as the following shows:

Daneedjo, 45-50 years old, in Meidougou, said: “Of course we need it. Of course we thank them for that but to be treated as children every time make us sad. To be treated as if we were imploring their favour affects our dignity. There are some who are very kind but some are very rude. They ask us to stand in the line to get food and even if you move a centimetre to ease yourself they shout on as you were a child.”

Being displaced and having lost all their resources, these Mbororo refugees cannot do otherwise than rely on the assistance organized. This contrasts sharply with their former lifestyle and its freedom and independence.

The refugees in Meidougou village were divided in two groups: those who had lost all their cattle and had no other means to survive life except in the camps surrounding the village. Those who still have some cattle were living in the centre of the village and hired someone to herd their cows in the bush. But their relationship is maintained by mutual visits almost everyday. The camps do not consist of modern buildings but of nomadic huts constructed by each refugee family. This is, maybe, to maintain the suggestion of a nomad's way of life. The compounds are not linked one to another but have vast spaces between them. Each family lives in their own compound, though many of the single men live together in one compound.

These living conditions have meant a drastic change for the Mbororos, who were used to roaming freely with their cattle. They have had to adapt now, not only to a sedentary lifestyle, which they might have done before during periods of drought, but also to a life of total dependency. Their position as strangers in the Meidougou community has brought this special aspect of being a refugee, dependence on international aid. Let me cite some of my observations in Meidougou:

“Around 10 O'clock I and my friend Illiyassa who is from Meidougou and who introduced me to the refugee families, were walking in the camp near Ardo's compound (a 65-year-old man), one of the respected men among the refugees because of his title of Ardo and his age. After the traditional long greeting, Illiyassa addressed Ardo while I wasn't paying attention: “Ardo, what are you doing there with a hoe in this hot sun?” Ardo turned and answered: “I hate doing nothing. Since I was young I have never experienced it. That is why I tried to cultivate this small piece of land to feel busy in the daytime. Then I became only a farmer, we are not real nomads anymore” and he laughed again.

Ardo gives a good insight into his situation. He admits that a return to nomadism would not be for him. He expresses nostalgia for his past when he was with his animals. He idealizes the past but is aware that things cannot return to this way of life. By engaging in these new activities (cultivating, selling calf sticks they make themselves) they are indirectly building up a new livelihood, which implies that they have to reformulate aspects of their idealized self. The distinction between refugees living in the camps (being seen as dependents and condemned to poverty) and those living in the centre of the village (who still have a link to pastoralism because they have some cattle left) is basically expressed in terms of being 'better'. On the other hand, the Mbororo in the camps are considered extreme strangers: they are only tolerated there by the original inhabitants, who expect them to move on soon.

The inferior position of the nomads in Meidougou can be understood by name giving. Every refugee is called by the name of current CAR president who came to power in a coup d'état: Bozizé. The first time I heard a person called this name was in a restaurant. The owner was a woman and had a 12-year-old Mbororo child as a cleaner. His food is his salary. I was having dinner there and asked the child why they always called him Bozizé. I wondered why a Muslim child would have this name. The answer I got was that all refugees from the CAR are called this. The next day at breakfast a Mbororo man and one of his relatives living in the centre joined us. We engaged in a discussion about relationships with refugees. The guest became very emotional and started telling what he thought: "It is not our will to become a refugee. It is something that God has decided and we hope that it will end one day. Every one who sees you calls you Bozizé or refugee as if you were responsible of the situation".

This underlines the feelings of being inferior to the rest of society. 'Refugee' has a pejorative connotation in Meidougou and is reserved only for people who are experiencing trauma after losing their means of survival. Refugees are also considered as dependents and invaders. However this marginalization has another side too. At the end of the month when UNHCR comes with food, every Meidougou villager envies the refugees their food while they are in some cases poorer than the refugees. Faced with this situation, many villagers have managed to get their own refugee cards, so they can also benefit from the help. This contrasts with some 'real' refugees who have never obtained such a card. So in this specific situation, having refugee status is much appreciated.

The Mbororo refugees live in relative peace in Cameroon in the camps or in town, but they have become very poor. They are no longer the independent nomads they once were but have become dependent on international aid. In their search for a living they have no other choice. This situation poses various dilemmas for them: first of all they feel betrayed in their own cultural style; they are no longer mobile and have had to adapt to a sedentary life. This is not new for nomadic communities who experienced this in their history as well but the explicit dependency of aid does add a new dimension. Their feeling of loss of dignity makes them feel miserable. Added to this is the realization that they are trapped in this situation in which they are also explicitly made into inferior strangers.

This case of the Mbororos who face political insecurity shows that there is an end to the agency people can develop in these insecure environments. The Mbororo have hardly any choices left but to give up their culture and submit to an inferior life. How

this will finally be accepted and if the nomads will be flexible enough to create a new lifestyle and feelings of well-being is a question that will only be answered over time.

Case study: Angola
The jungle of strategising with identities

Ten years ago I (Inge) who am describing this case study, wrote an article on exile and identity among south-east Angolan immigrants in Rundu, Namibia (Brinkman 1999). I argued then that many of these immigrants suppressed their ethnic and national identity so as to avoid being recognized as immigrants. There had been Angolans in the region for a long time, as men had been going to the South African mines through Rundu. Since the nationalist war in Angola had started in the 1960s and the civil war in the 1970s, immigrants from Angola came to be increasingly called by the negative local word for 'refugees' (*vatwauka*) and they were associated with theft, smuggling, war and witchcraft. The number of refugees grew and local traditional leaders were not inclined to give them all access to land. Without papers, their access to education and wage labour was also limited. Many of the immigrants did not have any papers and feared being sent back to south-east Angola. At the time, this area was controlled by the UNITA rebel movement and all those people who had fled to Namibia were assumed to be MPLA (government party) supporters. Such fears of arrest and deportation were not unfounded: groups of people were frequently simply dropped off across the border.

Given this context of stereotypical labelling, difficult access to land, labour and education, and police raids that took Angolan immigrants back into war-torn Angola, the immigrants preferred to be as inconspicuous as possible. Some informants claimed to be Namibian, although it was obvious from their answers that they were not.

Those who said they were Angolans complained they were discriminated against and expressed nostalgia for the life they had led in Angola. They focused on their options for moving and living as they pleased. Before the war, people from this region had been highly mobile, had visited relatives, worked as migrant labour, moved villages, and practised slash-and-burn agriculture. During the war they had been forced to move or stay put as the fighting parties deemed fit.

In Namibia, possibilities for social mobility were limited and the refugees also missed contact with their relatives, many of whom were still in Angola or in Zambia. In many cases, people had no news whatsoever of their relatives; often not knowing whether or not people were still alive, whether or not they had established families, etc. News only came sporadically through the Red Cross message system and through new arrivals from Angola, whose knowledge was usually also limited, due to the impossibility of travelling within Angola.

In 1998 the MPLA Angolan government party launched an offensive and UNITA's influence in south-east Angola quickly diminished. A year later, UNITA's headquarters in Jamba, formerly a hamlet in the far south-east fell and UNITA's forces moved to the Lundas more to the north. This meant that the war became much less intensive in south-east Angola and in 2002, after Unita's long-time leader Jonas Savimbi was killed in combat, peace accords were signed some months later. How do

people feel about mobility now that the war is over? Is there still a tendency to suppress 'Angolanness'?

About mobility we can talk at length and briefly. People associate peace with the possibility to move. Peace means movement and people rejoice in the fact that they once again have options in this respect. It is also a long story. There are seemingly endless conversations about the changing road conditions, new travel possibilities, the changing whereabouts of relatives, upcoming visits, ways of sending messages and pictures, and the costs and network problems of making international cell phone calls. And not only in talking, much time is spent on this. People save money to make a journey into Angola to visit relatives, they wait – also seemingly endlessly – at the bus stop for the transport to take them over the border, the journey is endless in itself.

Yet, this is not as important for all people of Angolan descent. The evaluations of being Angolan and assessing ties with Angola differ sharply. Even within a family people may consider their relationship to Angola in strongly divergent terms. Those who feel Namibian stress nationality as a singular category. For those who do not feel specifically Namibian, it is often more complex: not one nationality, but multiplicity stressed. Often they combine Angolan, Zambian and Namibian residence in their lifetime and stress an old saying: "the country is the people". If the configuration of the population changes, the country also changes. Their feeling of national belonging shifts according to circumstances, mainly related to people and not to territory alone.

Age is definitely a factor in the evaluation of national belonging: 3 quotes from 3 generations:

1. Minga's mother:

Mother: "Here in Namibia there is no radio in our language. We are foreigners, they do not want it."

Minga's mother never explicitly spoke about her national identity but is clearly oriented towards Angola, even though she moved to Namibia and South Africa in 1975. Nearly all her friends and colleagues are Angolan, and she lived in Angola between 1996 and 2006. While the children in the house always switch the television to Namibian, South African English-speaking channels, she or her husband will always tell them to put on the Angolan channel.

2. Minga:

Minga: I call myself Namibian, but with Angolan parents. Even though I am a Namibian, I know that my blood is from Angola. So. It means a lot also. That is where I actually came from, even though I was not born there.

Inge: But you feel you are Namibian?

Minga: Yes and we don't think of living in Angola. Only visiting. Living there, it is like we will not fit there, we won't adapt.

Minga has been to Angola twice. She went to visit a family who had been on a prolonged visit to Namibia in 1998 and took care of her baby during the daytime when Minga was at school. Minga is interested in learning Portuguese and the seven-year old child of her uncle in Angola is staying in her house for schooling. But Minga regards herself as Namibian, would not want to live in Angola, she was born in

Namibia, the family watches English television at home and most of the friends are Namibian.

3. Minga's 11-year old son:

Inge: Have you been to Angola?

Son: No. And I do not want to.

Inge: Why not?

Son: Because there was a war there, I don't want to be near. And my father would not allow me to go.

So while his mother has visited Angola, his father would object him going there. Even a younger brother of Minga's mother felt differently about his Angolan background than his sister and her husband:

I am Namibian fully. For my elder sister and her husband it is different because they were already married and adult. I do not remember Angola. But for them; they have memories. Also they visited Angola, me I never went. For me, if I went there, it would be entirely new.

This brother was sharply aware of the fact that the war had pronouncedly influenced his ways of creating and maintaining social networks. He knew that normally his life would have been centred around his relatives in the village: he would have grown up with them, visited them, supported them or they him accordingly. But due to the war he moved to South Africa with the Portuguese employers of the husband of his elder sister. He knew that it was as a consequence of this that his social networks revolved around these unrelated age-mates rather than his relatives. He did not know his relatives personally, apart from a few who had visited Namibia. Forced mobility during the war has had direct consequences for this man's patterns of social interaction and the evaluation of his own identity. For his elder sister this was very different, despite the problems of staying in contact due to the war she deemed her family network very important. She even went back to Angola even though peace had not yet come.

Inge: Why did you go to Angola when there was still a war on?

Mother: Because so many relatives had died; I only had this one brother in Luanda. So I said: "Let me go."

As indicated, age is not the only factor; Minga, although much younger than her uncle, regards herself as Namibian but, unlike him, cherishes her Angolan background and actively invests in her relationship with her Angolan relatives now that the possibilities for communication with Angola are growing since the end of the war.

These statements, which concur with other evidence given during interviews, reveal that long-term residents of Angolan descent are much more open now about their origins than during the war. Then, the position of many Angolan refugees was precarious, and given the context of social insecurity they attempted to hide the fact that were of Angolan background. This changed for Angolans resident in Namibia during the war. Most of the current residents of Angolan descent have ID; many of those who do not returned to Angola and only go to Namibia on a short-term basis for visits, health and trade. This opportunity is also being seized by Angolans who were never in Namibia during the war and is increasing the overall Angolan presence in Namibia. Although most come into Angola through the legal border posts, there is

still informal border-crossing. Naturally these visitors are less inclined to disclose their Angolan background. So now residents of Angolan descent are more open about their national background, while Angolan visitors may not always like to indicate their national identity. There are also Angolans who stay for longer visits; especially youngsters who live in Namibia for educational purposes (Minga's niece being an example, but also adolescents attending institutes for higher education), often staying with relatives who have been in Namibia for a long time already. This has also increased communication between Angola and Namibia in many ways with visits, phone calls, letters, pictures, messages etc.

For some people the war in Angola and the resulting forced mobility has had consequences for their social networks. Instead of having village relatives they have had to build up other networks of social contact. Age is a factor here and people with memories and a past in Angola are more likely to invest in their relations with Angola than people who left their country of birth as a child. Yet age is not the only factor; exceptions also exist as the example of Minga shows. She is very clear about her 'Namibian-ness' but also aware of her ties to Angola. Minga and other people with immigrant ties are excited about the ever-increasing possibilities to communicate with Angola. The main factor is of course peace itself, but also now the dangers of land mines are diminishing, road conditions are getting better, and the mobile phone network is available most of the time. This has resulted in many people seeking to re-establish ties with relatives; often people they had never heard of directly before, people who only existed in family histories and an occasional rumours from newly arriving refugees. The example of Minga's uncle shows that many people without a past in Angola are not interested in establishing such ties. Due to the war and having fled, they were forced to build up other connections.

There are some clear lines of change: immigrants who came before the end of the war and have stayed a considerable time in Namibia are now much more open about their background than during the war. The end of the war has influenced communication possibilities. This, coupled with increased technological possibilities, has indeed resulted in more contact between Namibia and Angola. Not all immigrants are equally interested in investing in these new possibilities. Age plays a role here, but there are also exceptions, of people who, due to coincidences in life, were drawn to activating their ties to Angola.

Discussion

These three cases present different forms of political insecurity. In Chad it is still very much a daily reality: there is a lot of memory of political repression and violence but a lived experience as well. Thus people relate vividly to a past that informs their present reactions to violence and repression. The Mbororo in the camps in Cameroon are the ultimate outcome of political insecurity. They are the victims and do not have much left to choose in their daily repertoire. Although they find themselves in a peaceful situation in Cameroon this is at the same time a violation of their culture. The Angolans in the Namibia-Angola border zone have survived a war that forced them to hide their identity, a situation of being that has clear repercussions now the time of political repression and violence seems to be over in the post-conflict era.

The experience of political insecurity has shaped these communities in their mobility. The way people 'wheel and deal' with political insecurity may be characterised by navigating. As was indicated for youth in Africa in a recent book edited by Christiansen (2006), youth navigate through life. Youth as a special category of people but also as a special phase in life, where navigating and searching for self is part of that phase and group, and is considered as liminal. In a way, the people who live through political insecurity and violence are confronted with liminality. There is no protection and it is completely unknown what will happen tomorrow. Life could stop at any moment. One carves out a living or feels someone demands a lot of navigating, in between the different parties; in between different social groups. For the Chadian families, this navigating led them into displacement; they moved from one place to the other, a movement that has no end in the near future. It has resulted in the Hadjerai being spread over large geographical spaces. It has also led to a mentality of travelling among them that has taken on a special form and meaning with the dynamics of the civil war.

For many Angolans the war meant a move to Zambia or Namibia, where they partially integrated into the communities there. The Angolan war made them move and immobilised or displaced the refugees in their new country. They are able to move again and this is related to freedom and to peace. In the case of the Mbororo in Cameroon, war meant the end of mobility and in a way this case shows too that not everybody is able to navigate. A period of political insecurity always results in people being completely immobilized and without a prosperous future perspective. There is an end to agency in these circumstances.

The form these mobilities have taken under political insecurity has influenced the definition of self, or better the redefinition of self. In the case of the Mbororo in Cameroon, the only reference point people have is their past, where for them mobility meant freedom, but even more so mobility was their identity. The fact that they are now kept in camps and do not see a way out makes them not only immobile but also denies them an identity. The difference with the other groups is that they are cut off from their family members who are continuing their lives in the insecure CAR or southern Chad.

For the Hadjerai of Chad, during the civil war there has been a continuous situation of being betwixt and between. In one village some people could be in the government army and others part of the rebel forces, but both sides experienced problems. They gained an ethnic label by being considered enemies by both presidents: Habre and Deby, who were leading them into a situation of being threatened and finally killed. This ethnic identity raises fear among people in N'Djamena where the Hadjerai have increasingly been described as ferocious, and thus have jobs like guards. On the other hand, they have been marginalized as the people who believe in Margay. They are seen as 'false Muslims' and this politicization of their identity has forced them into a more united front as Hadjerai. They also find themselves in opposition or being oppressed by dominant groups. This is very much the case in the Lake Chad area where people in power push them from their lands and there is little they can do about it. These circumstances however seem to reinforce their ethnic identity and increasingly the Hadjerai are uniting in associations and organizations. Hadjerai who have moved out of central Chad still feel that Chad is where they belong. Although they might never return to this homeland, they do not forget it and contacts with

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people at 'home' are kept alive, increasingly so now with mobile telephony, which makes a big difference in communication in a country where there are few good roads.

In the case of Angolan refugees, mobilities have made them adopt a multiple national identity. It is after a war that people play with their different identities. In a way this has become a resource for some, while for others identity papers and the state's emphasis on the importance of one single nationality present enormous limitations. It is clear that navigating between these identities is not the same for everyone and that it opens and closes doors. The memory of the war makes the younger generation hesitate in acknowledging their Angolan identity. They prefer to stay Namibian. This national identity however does not mean that family ties or social identities are negated. On the contrary, belonging to a family on both sides of the border is increasingly recognized as an asset and people travel a lot despite the difficulties involved.

In all three cases it can be seen that people have made an identity out of their marginal position. Marginality has become a social resource as well (cf. marginality as a resource as was positioned by Peluso & Ribot 2003).

So the situations of war and crisis structure and give meaning to social and individual lives. However to understand the differences, it is important to understand the experience of violence. Violence can be experienced as an acute crisis, a rupture with history, but what happens if violence endures and becomes historic. This will not only entail the banality of violence (Hannah Arendt) but also structural changes in society as war becomes an integral part of history, and not only a breach. The cases make this very clear. In Chad and Angola, war has wrought enduring changes; in Cameroon it is more sharply felt as crisis. This is of course not to say that Chadians and Angolans accept violence as normalcy, but entire generations have been forced to structure their lives in a context of war and violence. What happens when peace starts after such prolonged conflict and violence? The Angolan case shows that some people experience peace as a kind of rupture and wish to continue their lives as if the war had not ended (cf. people who do not want to have anything to do with 'Angola' and still classify it as 'dangerous') whereas others try to combine these old and new parts of history (Minga), and yet others live out the new conditions of peace (Minga's mother who has gone to Angola again).

As a final note: we would like to introduce the term displacement cultures. In April this year Mirjam attended a conference on displacement economies, dealing with all kind of economies that have been displaced from the local markets in war zones to the global banking system. The conference was organised by Hammar Amanda at the IAI Uppsala. In our case we might adopt the concept displacement culture, where we define culture in relation to displacement and all the contradictions that this involves.

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