

## **Reproducing society/producing history. Returning to reflect on African youth**

**Giovedì 22 settembre / Thursday 22 September 11.00-13.00 (I sess.), 14.00-16.30 (II sess.)**

**PROPONENTI:** Armando CUTOLO (Università di Siena); Luca JOURDAN (Università di Bologna)

**ABSTRACT:** Since the Nineties, in a time when the combination of neoliberal reforms with demographic growth has produced new inequalities and social tensions, African youths have been generally portrayed as enduring shared conditions of disrupted “social becoming” and “waithood”, bearing claims to social recognition and unsatisfied desires of success, consumption, “modernity”. While acknowledging scholarship that has highlighted access to social seniority as a central theme for the analysis of conflicts involving youths, our panel would like to widen such a frame to larger apparatuses of social reproduction and/or to explicit forms of resistance to the reproduction of existing social orders. Moreover, we invite scholars working on the new paths of subjectivation and mobilization, as well as on the new ways of inhabiting the public sphere undertaken by African youths, to frame the category of “youth” as a product of the historical present and, at the same time, as an instrument enabling new generations to act in it.

### **PAPERS:**

**Richard BANÉGAS**, *Street politics, youth vigilantism and generational imaginaries in Burkina Faso*

#### **ABSTRACT:**

In October 2014, huge crowds of urban youngsters – including women - took the streets in Ouagadougou, Bobo Dioulasso, Koudougou and other cities in Burkina Faso to resist President Blaise Compaore’s will to reform the constitution in order to remain in power. Under the banner of opposition parties, trade unions and new civic movements, pacific demonstrations turned into a civic insurgency. The voting day, the National Assembly was burnt, as well as other symbols of the autocratic regime. The social mobilization was particularly due to the energy of new civic movements – such as the Balai citoyen (civic broom) – recently created by young hip hop artists. This street pressure provoked the fall of the Compaore’s regime and the launching a democratic transition, under close military scrutiny. In September 2015, the former Compaore’s presidential guard tried to stop the transition by arresting the Head of State, the Prime minister and other incumbents. This coup sparked another wave of massive civic resistance. Young militants took again the streets and, after a while, have been joined by some military factions to oust the putschists. The transition could resume, heading to the first pluralist election.

Based upon some (incomplete) field research among Burkinabè activists and students, this communication will reflect upon these youth mobilization process and structures. Did the radicalization of street politics in Burkina Faso and the success of popular demonstration produce a shift in vertical political and generational relations? Did urban young subalterns become the new sovereigns of what some observers called a new “Streetcracy”? Or did they come back, after a while, to their lower social position? Did the growth of a new youth vigilantism in the cities and villages and all these insurgent civic events contribute to an alteration of generational political imaginaries?

#### **PROPOSER’S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Richard Banégas** is professor of Political Science at Sciences Po, and Researcher at CERI (Centre de Recherches internationales). His research area is mainly West Africa with a focus on Ivory Coast, Benin and Burkina Faso. He also worked in the Great Lakes region (Uganda). He holds an MA from Sciences Po Bordeaux (1991), a PhD from Sciences Po Paris (1998) and the habilitation to supervise doctoral research (HDR) from the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (2006), where he was the Head of the African

studies Master's program for about 15 years and still codirects the Joint African Studies Program with Columbia University.

A member of the International African Institute (London) and former president of the Association des chercheurs de *Politique africaine*, he is still involved in this reference academic journal. R. Banégas is also co-editor of *Les Afriques* book series at Karthala Publishers. In addition to his research and teaching activities, he is the permanent consultant on Africa for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Policy Planning Unit.

His previous key research concentrated on democratization processes in Benin and Uganda and his current projects explore the issues of citizenship, violence and mobilization of the youth in West Africa, with a special focus on the Ivory Coast. He recently directed a collective research on street politics in West Africa, and he heads now a new comparative research program on « The Social life of ID papers in Africa » that just started in 2016 (with 15 researchers covering 10 countries). His interests also include the topics of war, crisis resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.

**Ann CASSIMAN**, *Spiders on the internet. Cyber trickery through romance fraud as a democratic sphere of resistance among urban youth in Nima (Accra)*

**ABSTRACT:** The increasing accessibility of the digital world has opened up new possibilities for many youths across Africa to engage with the wider world and to reformulate their own aspirations. The internet has equally redefined old forms of inequalities and reshuffled old global hierarchies.

This paper looks into a particular "fraudulent" use of the net that has become widespread among the youth of Nima, a popular and densely populated neighbourhood in the city of Accra that is publicly known for its high unemployment rates, its poverty and lawlessness. In the cyber cafes of Nima, and in the homes of some technically equipped young men, groups of friends meet to browse the virtual world of dating sites hoping to find online girl- and boyfriends that can easily be tricked into send money, a practice internationally coined 'romance fraud'. In contrast to the Camerounian *feymen*, or the Ivorian *bluffeurs* who enrich themselves by means of well-arranged criminal networks, romance fraud has in a way democratized the accessibility to fame and fortune and thereby vulgarized these petty modes of resistance against older forms of exclusion. One only needs a few Ghana Cedis to buy browsing time, a group of friends who are cyberwise, a sense of the 'white man's' psychological reasoning, and time, lots of time. Young men and increasingly young women have all it needs to become a good 'browser' and to cash gifts through money transfer banks by their virtue of deceit.

In this paper I will show how Nima's young men and women have found new ways of inhabiting a new transnational online and offline public sphere that is within reach for all. The paper will also investigate the role of girls in these new spaces of communication. Some of these girls play a transgressive role as urban (*Ananse*-like) tricksters, as they juggle with truth and deceit while navigating between transnational online and offline worlds.

**PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Ann Cassiman**

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**Luca CIABARRI**, *Talkin' tahrib amongst Somaliland youth. Development, emigration, and the social allocation of future*

**ABSTRACT:**

Besides its literal meaning, the word tahrib -illegal migration- conveys for the Somaliland youth also more evocative and powerful senses, charged with danger, adventure, and freedom. It implies, for instance, breaking with the social barriers that impede personal growth and economic success, or breaking with the parents' generation, who became rich through legal access to long-distance-emigration and promised a better future in the new Somaliland, after the civil war. It also involves however the survival strategies of the worse-off families, where in ambiguous inter-generational relationships the fathers are willing to push their sons abroad in order to ensure a source of income. It is, furthermore, an act of rebellion towards local stagnation as well as towards the general systems of repression against international mobility. Aim of this paper is to review the past literature on youth emigration dreams and aspirations in the Horn of Africa and move beyond a number of too general assertions by trying to situate these dreams and aspiration more deeply into the social structure and dynamics, in other words by developing a reflection on the social allocation of future. A central axis of my analysis will be the concept of inflation, the inflation of imaginaries linked to emigration, but also linked to possession, according to local semantics, and the inflation generated by a remittance economy. A language pulling together psychology, economics and social analysis pledges to fill a number of gaps between the aspirational dimension and the general process of social reproduction.

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL PROPONENTE:**

**Luca Ciabbarri**, ricercatore confermato in Antropologia culturale presso l'Università Statale di Milano. Ricerche sul campo in Somalia – Somaliland e Corno d'Africa – in Italia sul tema della migrazione forzata. Temi di ricerca: conflitti e processi di pace in Somalia; sviluppo e aiuto umanitario; migrazioni internazionali. Tra le ultime pubblicazioni: I rifugiati e l'Europa Tra crisi internazionali e corridoi d'accesso.

**Armando CUTOLO**, *Soro/Ouattara VS Goudé/Gbagbo. Youth, paradigmatic relations and social reproduction in Ivorian politics*

**ABSTRACT:**

During the years of the Ivorian crisis, discussing about Ivorian politics implied a recurring reference to two dyads of main political actors. In the nationalist camp there was the Laurent Gbagbo/Charles Blé Goudé dyad : the couple formed by the president of the Ivorian republic and the charismatic leader of the patriotic youth (the "*jeunes patriotes*") supporting him. On the opposite side, in the rebellion camp, there was the Alassane Ouattara/Guillaume Soro dyad : a couple formed by the leader of the RDR party who had been evicted from presidential elections in October 2000, and the leader of the federation of armed insurgent groups known as *Forces Nouvelles*.

The parallelisms observable in these two opposed couples of political actors are worth enquiring. Each of them was constituted, on the one side, by an aged leader with a long career within Ivorian politics and having been the founder of a political party; on the other side, by a young leader whose political career had started within the Ivorian powerful students syndicate (FESCI), reaching eventually the power to mobilize and use the social and military strength of thousands of Ivorian youths.

The paper will dwell on the analysis of these apparent similarities, showing their role in connecting, within the symbolic and the political realms, national issues concerning citizenship with generational issues concerning social reproduction and personhood. The analysis will bring to light how the two dyads have embodied, in a paradigmatic way, deeply rooted questions concerning moral relations of debt and exchange between generations. From such a standpoint it will be possible, moreover, to interpret the

different meanings and roles given to “youth” (*jeunesse*) within the two opposite political camps during the Ivorian crisis, and the present transformations of these meanings.

**PROPOSER’S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Armando Cutolo** is associate professor of anthropology at the University of Siena, in the Department of Social, Political and Cognitive Studies. He has worked on kinship and personal dependence, on state formation and on oral history in Zimbabwe and in Côte d’Ivoire. He has carried an extensive enquiry among Ivorian *jeunes patriotes* and their “street parliaments” during the years of the crisis. Currently, he is working on Ivorian ID apparatuses within the PIAF research program (ANR), “*La vie sociale des papiers d’identification en Afrique*”.

**Francesco FANOLI**, *Hierarchical orders, power relations end intermingling of “durées” in Dakar’s làmb (wrestling)*

**ABSTRACT:**

Informed by a long term field-work, this intervention focuses on the intertwining and friction of hierarchical orders that participate in the production of political subjectivities in the “world” of Dakar *làmb* (“*lutte avec frappe*”). In order to shed light on the economy of agency structured by the overlapping of hierarchical orders, I will link some ethnographical scenes focused on the organization and negotiation of the power relations between different members of an *écurie* (wrestling gym) in Pikine (Dakar), whit some public representations of *làmb*. The coexistence in the same social space of two different order of differentiation (between junior and senior, and between big and little wrestler) will be analyzed referring to the intermingling of “*durées*” which inform the “local” configuration of “modernity”. Placing the ideological construct of “youth” in a wider hierarchical frame it will be possible to explore: i) the specificity of its “local” historical production; ii) the complexity of the process of political subjectivation embedded in a tense and historically thick “moral economy”.

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL PROPONENTE:**

**Francesco Fanoli** has received his PhD in “Anthropology and Historical-linguistics studies” from University of Messina in 2015. He has published papers on African migration and “griots”. He has recently conducted a long-term fieldwork on “Traditional Senegalese wrestling” practices in Dakar, focusing on the “sportivization”, embodiment, and socio-cultural processes at stake in the fights.

**Pietro FORNASETTI**, *Politics of jealousy. International migration and social mobility in a migrants belonging village of Burkina Faso*

**ABSTRACT:**

Wokubi is a peasant village located in south-eastern Burkina Faso, on the frontier between precolonial Ouagadougou moaga kingdom and the bisa region. Despite its marginal position in the present-day national territory, Wokubi is a node of young migrants networks connecting national, international and inter-continental locations. During the past 4 decades, the tendency towards geographic mobility has increased in terms of frequency and distances. Simultaneously, “travel” and “adventure” (local synonyms for migration) have become the main frame through which young men pursue economic independence, social status and political recognition. Today, local authorities (chiefs, elders, imams, but also civil servants) often adress to “those who are elsewhere” as a resource for financing development projects (construction of markets, mosques, schools...). Recognition comes with a cost : if migrants can assert and increase their status by sending remittances, they are also the target of constant demands, coming both from the authorities and their own kins.

Does the assertion of this new subjectivity changes the logic of social reproduction and inter-generational relationships ?

In order to investigate this question, I will firstly analyze a corpus of nearly 400 international migratory paths, exhaustively collected during fieldwork in Wokubi. This material will be used in order to establish a periodisation of Wokubi migrants mobility patterns (i.e. reconfiguration of migrations in the circumstances of the recent libyan crisis). This will thus make appear how exterior geopolitical contingencies can impact the village migrants choices.

But I will show that, in order to reach the migration phenomenon in it's complexity, it is necessary to invert this perspective by considering how migrants choices are also conditioned, so to speak, from the inside. Indeed, the analysis of some life histories will show how solidarities and tensions coming from the migrants household and kindread affect their conducts, and thus how their choices are intrinsically interconnected with those of their related (migrants or not).

The conclusions will focus on the necessity to combine these two perspectives - from the outside and from the inside - in order to overlap the apparent antinomy between reproduction and change.

#### **PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Pietro Fornasetti** is PhD candidate at the Institut des Mondes Africains (IMAF), EHESS Paris. He is conducting fieldwork research on migrations moving from the bisa region (Burkina Faso). From 2012, he collaborates with the ANR project Kinsources. His main research interests are kinship and human mobility.

**Thomas FOUQUET**, *The urban adventure in the feminine: Negotiating prestige all under stigma?*

Français : « L'aventure citadine au féminin : négocier le prestige sous l'empire du stigmaté ? »

#### **ABSTRACT:**

Comment devenir « grand » sans rassembler les critères de la séniorité sociale légitime, voire en s'en écartant ou en les contestant énergiquement ? Comment négocier la stigmatisation adressée à celles et ceux qui s'affranchissent des normes dominantes et/ou jouent avec elles, tout en glanant des arguments de prestige décalés vis-à-vis des canons socioculturels locaux ?

En repartant de ces questions et de ce qu'elles disent de sociétés urbaines ouest-africaines travaillées par une profonde hétéroglossie sociale, morale et culturelle, cette contribution s'intéresse à ce qui apparaît d'abord comme un oxymore : le succès du subalterne. Je m'appuierai pour cela sur mon enquête auprès de jeunes femmes dakaroises que j'ai nommées des « aventurières de la nuit », par référence au thème de l'aventure qui a connu un certain succès dans les études africaines au cours des vingt dernières années. Alors que différents travaux ont bien montré que, face à l'impossibilité d'une mobilité sociale ascendante par le biais des moyens légitimes que sont les études et le salariat, de nombreux jeunes ouest-africains empruntent des chemins de traverse, dont l'aventure migratoire constitue l'une des facettes les plus visibles, mais non exclusive. Tout en se situant souvent en marge de la légalité et de la « bonne moralité », ces jeunes parviennent à s'imposer dans les imaginaires sociaux en tant que figures d'une certaine réussite. Néanmoins, ces études se sont attachées de façon quasi exclusive à des pratiques et figures masculines. Aussi, qu'en est-il des jeunes femmes qui, à l'instar de leurs compatriotes masculins, manifestent tout à la fois leur indocilité, leurs désirs d'émancipation vis-à-vis du statut d' « éternel cadet », et leurs aspirations pour des mondes plus vastes ? La perspective du genre permettra ici de produire des effets de critique et de jeter une nouvelle lumière sur ces trajectoires sociales hors-normes et qui, néanmoins, expriment quelque chose de la recomposition des fondements sociaux/moraux du prestige et de la reconnaissance dans des métropoles ouest-africaines globalisées. On s'attachera également à rendre compte de l'historicité de ces questions dans le contexte urbain sénégalais, entre situations coloniale et postcoloniale.

**PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Thomas Fouquet** est chargé de recherche en anthropologie sociale au Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS-France) depuis octobre 2015. Il est rattaché à l'Institut des Mondes Africains (IMAF) et chercheur associé à la Chaire d'études africaines comparées de L'université Mohammed VI-Polytechnique de Rabat (Maroc). Il a réalisé sa thèse de doctorat à l'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), soutenue en 2011 sous la direction de Michel Agier. Ses travaux portent sur les citadinités subalternes parmi les jeunes d'Afrique de l'Ouest, sous l'angle des imaginaires migratoires et des cosmopolitismes au ras du sol qui s'en dégagent. Il s'attache tout particulièrement à examiner ces questions à travers l'étude comparée des usages et modes de configuration (sociale, économique, politique) des nuits urbaines dans différentes métropoles ouest-africaines, à Dakar et Abidjan en particulier. L'étude du politique des loisirs urbains nocturnes est ainsi au cœur de ses recherches actuelles. Il a publié de nombreux articles et chapitres d'ouvrage sur ces questions, et a dirigé plusieurs numéros de revue et ouvrages collectifs. Il est par ailleurs membre du Joint African Studies Program (JASP) qui associe l'IMAF en France et l'université Columbia à New-York. Dans ce cadre, il développe des travaux en lien avec la question du politique des cultures urbaines en Afrique de l'Ouest. Depuis 2013, il est membre du comité de rédaction de la revue *Politique africaine*.

**Alessandro JEDLOWSKI**, *Street gang culture and the afterlife of kung fu films in Abidjan*

**ABSTRACT:**

Kung fu films made in Hong Kong and Taiwan are one of the most influential film references for audiences around Africa, but, despite their influence, their distribution and reception around the continent has been only rarely studied (cf. Joseph 1999; Van Staden 2014). Exploring a range of different materials (interviews, archival materials, newspapers, etc.) collected during an ongoing research project about video film production and circulation in Abidjan, in this paper I intend to draft an analysis of the long-term impact of kung fu films on street gang culture in Abidjan and on contemporary film production in the country. Kung fu films began to circulate in Côte d'Ivoire in the 1970s. They were screened in most of the numerous popular neighborhoods theatre halls along Indian films and American B-movies (cf. Kouassi 2014). Their emphasis on fighting, the discipline of the body and the revolt to forms of authority perceived as oppressive (cf. Prashad 2003) made them very popular among young viewers, who took explicit inspiration from them and began practicing martial arts, a development that run parallel to the institutionalization of martial arts practice in sport clubs around the country. The street gang movement which emerged from these influences, known as the "Ziguehi" (which according to some informants translates as "the modern warriors") became one of the most influential in recent Ivorian history: it did not only influence a number of cultural trends emerged throughout the 1980s and 1990s, such as the GnamaGnama dance style and the coupé décalé music (see also Newell 2012) but inspired also the new wave of Ivorian film and television directors who are making an attempt at creating a local commercial video film industry.

**PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Alessandro Jedlowski** is a Belgian Scientific Research Fund (F.R.S.-FNRS) post-doctoral fellow at the University of Liege (Belgium). His current research analyses the political and economic dimensions of film production in the southern Nigerian video film industry (Nollywood) and compares them with those of other similar industries emerging around the African continent, particularly in Ethiopia and Côte d'Ivoire. He published several essays on this topic in international journals and edited collections, and he is the co-editor (together with Philip Harrison and Ute Rösenthaler) of a forthcoming special issue of the Journal of African Cultural Studies on China-Africa media interactions.

**Luca JOURDAN**, *Kingdoms, land and conflict. An analysis of youth mobilization in Kasese district (Uganda)*

**ABSTRACT:**

In the last fifty years, Kasese district (western Uganda) has been ravaged by many rebel groups. In the 1950s, the Rwenzururu movement, an armed group composed mainly of Bakonjo, started his struggle against Batoro's hegemony in the region. At the beginning of 1980s, a new faction emerged, the NALU (National Army for the Liberation of Uganda), starting a campaign against the central government. In the mid of the nineties the NALU were defeated but another rebel group, an Islamic extremist movement called ADF (Allied Democratic Forces), installed itself in the Rwenzori region. Nowadays some ADF units are still active in the North Kivu (Congo DRC). In the last decade the Ugandan government has recognized different kingdoms in the area. This new phase seems to have fostered political and ethnic fragmentation related, inter alias, to land competition. Recently (2014 and 2016) some militias poorly armed, composed mainly of young Bakonjo, attacked police stations and army barracks in the region, killing tens of civilians. Starting from an historical perspective, this paper wants to shed light on the dynamics of the recent conflict focusing on the mobilization of youth. I will argue that the young people involved in the recent attacks cannot be considered simply as a lumpen youth ready to serve the interests of the big men in the region. On the contrary, they have strong ideological motivations rooted in a long term separatist sentiment which has inflamed the region in the last half century.

**PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Luca Jourdan** is Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Dipartimento di Storia, Culture,Civiltà, Università di Bologna