



## *Circulations in the global South: Ethnographic explorations of globalized exchanges*

New deadline for panel proposals:  
10th november

**APAD Conference**

**Lomé, 23-26 June 2020**

**Call for panel proposals**

**Increased circulation of people, but also of objects, commodities, models, norms, action repertoires**

Objects, people and ideas have been moving between continents for centuries. Africa was connected to these flows long before the "first globalization" of the 15th century but these movements have since accelerated at an unprecedented rate since the end of the Cold War, thanks to improved transport and communication technologies, trade liberalization, and the proliferation of multilateral economic agreements. Interactions and interconnections within the global South are also growing, becoming more complex and expanding in relation to emerging political and economic poles. At the macro-political level, the new millennium has seen the growing involvement of China, India, Turkey and Brazil in the economic, political and cultural landscape of the African continent. At the individual level, the opening of African countries to globalized markets, and, in particular, the importance of their economic exchanges with Asia, is profoundly transforming consumption patterns, cultural styles, forms of entrepreneurship and development models.

From this background, scholars agree to distinguish between two forms of globalization.

The first refers to the world of high finance, multinational corporations, aid institutions, international tribunals, NGOs, think tanks and transnational foundations. This "high end", "hegemonic", or "from above" type of globalization is reflected in the global South - particularly for aid-dependent countries - through the transfer and circulation of governance techniques, public action tools, management models, international norms and financial flows, supporting a form of global social engineering conveyed by international aid or regulatory institutions. It also includes new forms of economic and industrial cooperation within the global South. The strong interest in the "Belt and Road Initiative" on the African continent, and the concomitant process of modernizing major transport and communication infrastructure (ports, airports, roads, railways), are but one of the most visible dimensions of these trends.

The second form of globalization, experienced by the majority of the world's population, is often associated with the transnational mobility of people. Evolving in the interstices or at the margins of the market economy, mobilizing modest financial investments, preferring

informal or semi-legal transactions, based on mutual trust and structured around ethnic and interknowledge networks, people like migrants, refugees, entrepreneurs, traders, brokers, would be the main actors of a "from below", "low-end", "non-hegemonic", "grassroots" or "inconspicuous" form of globalization. While the most visible example of the above processes is the massive import of Chinese industrial or consumer goods, the intensification of such interconnections "from below" is not limited to trade in the strict sense. Cultural productions also travel, such as Nollywood videos, which have spread throughout sub-Saharan Africa, then to Europe and to the United States. The democratization of high-speed Internet and 4G mobile telephony also allows for the rapid, massive and uncontrolled dissemination of information - but also rumors - well beyond national borders.

Like any dichotomy, juxtaposing - and sometimes even opposing - the globalization of the powerful and that of the subaltern groups poses the risk of thinking of them separately, thus losing sight of their interdependence and ensuing dynamics. Despite and beyond its variants, this way of thinking about globalization is closely linked to the work of the first theorists of globalization and the researchers they later inspired, who focused predominantly on human mobility.

What if, in addition to approaches that study the processes of globalization through the circulation of people, we also focused on the circulation of "things"? Ethnographies of "what circulates" make it possible not to prejudge the nature of the channels and circuits used (roads, hubs, nodes, regulatory mechanisms, infrastructures), nor the actors who circulate (entrepreneurs, businessmen, experts, civil servants, humanitarian personnel, migrants, etc.), nor the scales of observation of these phenomena. Behind a commodity, a norm or a model, there are indeed regulatory and governance institutions, political and economic actors, specific forms of design, production, distribution and reception/consumption, embedded in cultural or social organizational models. By adopting this perspective, the top and the bottom, the hegemonic and the subordinate, the high end and the low end no longer appear as separate worlds, but dimensions that are both indisputably and inextricably linked within a global supply chain or a travelling model.

This reversal of perspective is certainly not new. But its translation into empirical research is much more recent, especially as concerns the South.

### **Ethnographies of multi-scalar circulations: the APAD 2020 Conference**

Since its foundation in 1991, APAD (Association for the Anthropology of Social Change and Development) has been promoting in-depth qualitative research on the dynamics of social change and development policies driven by states or international aid.

After the Roskilde conference in 2018, devoted to mobility and migration, APAD proposes for its 2020 edition, co-organized with the Department of Anthropology and African Studies of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences (FSHS) of the University of Lomé (Togo), to focus on the multiple forms of large-scale circulation of goods, ideas, techniques, information and models that increasingly cross the global South and link it to the rest of the world. Panels or papers focusing on smaller-scale, regional or neighbouring countries' circulations, or showing the consequences of scale change in circulations, are also welcome.

We want to discuss the contribution of the anthropology of development to the fields and themes that are at the heart of the "global turn" in the social sciences. How does the anthropology of development take into account the dynamics of globalization?

From the initial study of localized interactions between developers and developed, anthropology of development has undoubtedly diversified its objects of study and broadened its field of observation. From the study of "the empirical interfaces of globalization" (APAD Conference 2007), to the ethnography of international aid bureaucracies and transnational

networks of experts and humanitarians, anthropology of development is making an original contribution to the study of globalization processes. However, its conceptual framework and empirical materials remain largely dependent on a North-South dialectic. The focus is more on unidirectional transfers - of norms, financial resources, institutional models to the South, and raw materials and migrant flows to the North - rather than on globalized exchange and connection dynamics. However, the globalization of aid practices and the transnationalization of its institutions are only one of the dimensions of the inclusion of the South in the processes of globalization. The 2020 APAD conference goes further; focusing on the multiple facets of globalization observed through the material and spatial dimensions of circulations in the global South.

### **Some ideas for panel contributions**

Papers that trace the itinerary, career, social or political biography of different types of "things" in circulation are welcomed. Commodity "biographies" are now a classic and well represented example of "thing-following studies", such as recent works on wax, khat, used cars, matsutake mushrooms, medicines, Chinese motorcycles, flip flops or French wine in China. The circulation of African products, in the continent or elsewhere, such as the spread of *gari* or *fonio* in West Africa, or food exports to Europe or Asia, or rap, or souvenirs for tourists, could also be studied. It will also be possible to trace the circulation of a technological innovation or know-how (such as motorized rickshaws or the multiple examples of "frugal innovation" in the fields of health, education, access to water and electricity, agriculture or microfinance), or of a public action tool or a travelling model (such as the partogram, contraceptive methods or the cash transfer system). Alternatively, papers could focus on cultural productions, such as fashion, dance, video, but also on more intangible "objects", such as collective action repertoires - the notion of female emancipation, the concept of gender and its transposition into development policies – as well as on mobilization strategies or transnational rumors, etc.

Some papers may focus on a specific phase of the circulation of an "object", others may attempt a comprehensive analysis; in any case, in the APAD tradition, papers should be based on solid empirical data.

The conference will be organized in the form of panels. These can be structured around the following axes:

#### *Paths, places and actors of circulations*

What are the paths, circuits or routes of globalized circulations? Which transnational networks support them? What are the connection points, which play the role of hubs, nodes of confluence and distribution of flows of goods, technological knowledge, entrepreneurial visions, development models, representations, or norms? To what extent do these connection points also become new places of power? Who are the actors of these large-scale circulations; organizing, feeding, controlling, regulating or opposing them? How do they fit into these flows? What intertwining of personal or collective histories is created throughout transnational circulations? What are the ambivalences observable in the ebb and flow induced by the trajectories of ideas and things? Circulations do not permeate territories and societies uniformly and without discontinuities. Connections are blocked; disruptions occur in supply chains or aid flows; regions or social groups are permanently "disconnected". Some roads or circuits are disappearing or falling into disuse, others are emerging to overcome blockages or disruptions. What are the places, social groups, or even tangible or intangible goods that have remained or

are kept away from circulation? What geopolitical, economic, social or historical factors determine these exclusions?

### *Regulations and (geo)political reshaping*

A common question emerges about the role played by international governance organizations in the standardization and global dissemination of norms and regulations (in international trade, environmental protection, good governance, human rights, women's empowerment, industrial production, intellectual property, public health or education policies, the combating of fraud, etc.), and their articulation with the agendas of national political and economic actors (political authorities, public administrations, trade unions, economic lobbies, NGOs, etc.). What are the effects of the acceleration of the circulation of globalized goods, ideas and norms on local and national political (im)balances? What political or legal factors favor circulations? Which others slow them down or hinder them? To what extent and through what processes does inclusion in global connections transform the political influence of actors (whether they be importers, consultants, political activists or artists)? Do the new transnational actors have a different relationship with the State and politics than the local economic elites they compete with? Finally, what is at stake in the current strengthening of partnerships, official and/or private, between countries of the Global South?

### *What happens to things in circulation?*

Unlike the notion of transfer, that of circulation makes it possible to characterize non-linear, colliding movements, and mutations of trajectories and paths. It also refers to unplanned temporalities and processes. Some panels may focus on the complex processes of transformation, adaptation and even transfiguration that occur during the circulation of "things". What new meanings or values do they acquire according to the uses assigned to them during their journey? While the countries of the South are confronted with a massive influx of mass-consumption products and universal models (whether mobile phones or public policy instruments); what are the social mechanisms that determine their appropriation, domestication, vernacularization or, on the contrary, rejection? Empirical reflections based on the processes of mixing and hybridization might also feed into the panels.

### *The local consequences of global circulations*

What impacts have the intensification of connections and large-scale exchanges on the daily lives of the social groups and territories which are implicated? What are the local effects of the arrival on African markets of a wide range of accessible manufactured products from Asia? What are the implications for local production and consumption systems? What are the visions and social practices associated with the entry of large segments of urban populations into the era of mass consumption? What are the changes in lifestyles? What are the political and economic practices and imaginaries of the actors linked to transnational circulations? Do their travel and trade experiences have an impact on their visions of economic development and entrepreneurial practices? And conversely, what does the insertion in distant circulations of "typical home-grown products" produce? Are there forms of mobilization expressing resistance, contestation, criticism, or concern about the new inequalities created by globalized capitalism?

## *The fieldwork of circulations*

Fieldwork in transnational settings raises questions about its epistemological and methodological implications of relevance to all potential panels. The tracking of a commodity - or a technique, a model, a vision, or a repertoire of collective action - fragments the field into a vast repertoire of actors, actants and situations belonging to transcultural and transnational social, cultural and political spaces. In addition to debates about multi-scalar studies, the multi-sited ethnography of global phenomena asks for a critical rethinking of the place of cultural areas, and forms of comparison, and the need for scholarship and specialization that is closely associated with it. The fragmentation of fieldwork specific to an ethnography of circulation inevitably leads researchers to question their own viewpoint – to ask oneself where does it come from? - and the modes of analysis and presentation of research.

## **The conference and panels**

The organizing committee welcomes thematic panels, workshops and round tables on the issues discussed above. In addition to panels devoted to the theme of the conference, a few panels may be dedicated to the classic APAD themes, with a view to meeting members and advancing research themes.

We also invite visual anthropologists and filmmakers to propose panels or submit films for public screenings.

The conference proceedings will be highlighted in one or more issues of *Anthropologie & développement / Anthropology & Development*, APAD's bilingual peer-reviewed journal, in special issues of other academic journals, and/or in a collective book.

The panels will consist of 4 papers each.

## **Calendar**

All panel organizers must submit an outline and a call for papers of maximum 600 words. The proposal must specify the full names, email, affiliation and institutional position of the panel organizers. It may include a short bibliography. It must be sent by e-mail no later than **10 November 2019** to the organizing committee at [colloque@apad-association.org](mailto:colloque@apad-association.org)

Proposers will be informed of the results of the selection on **1 December 2019**. The calls for papers for the various panels will be launched by the organizing committee and the panel organizers on **10 December 2019**.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is **15 February 2020**. The panel organizers will select the abstracts and propose a full panel program to the Scientific Committee by **5 March 2020**. The final list of panels will be published on **15 March 2020**.

The full text of the papers is expected by **15 May 2020**, for inclusion on the conference website.

## **Practical information**

A web page dedicated to the conference will soon be opened on the APAD website:

<https://apad-association.org/conference/conference-2020/?lang=en>

The working languages are French and English.

The conference will take place at the University of Lomé from 23 to 26 June 2020. Lomé is an air hub, facilitating the arrival of participants. A list of hotels, where special conference rates have been negotiated, will be posted in advance for reservations.

The registration fee includes documentation, coffee breaks, lunch in the University cafeteria, cocktail and APAD membership for the year 2020 (including the APAD newsletter and the issues of *Anthropology & development*, APAD journal).

- The standard fee is €120 (FCFA 78 0000) = €70 (FCFA 45 000) for conference registration fee + €50 (FCFA 33 000) for APAD membership.

Two reduced rates are possible:

- €95 (FCFA 62 000) = €70 for conference registration + €25 for people with an average income of less than 1000 euros/month.
- €70 (FCFA 45 000) = for APAD members who have paid their 2020 membership fees.

Some grants will be available for young researchers or doctoral candidates who struggle to finance their participation. Applications will be successful if applicants' papers have been accepted on to a panel, and the provision, in advance, of the text of the paper. The application procedures will be specified shortly.

After the conference, APAD will organize a writing workshop for young African researchers, based on a selection of the papers received.

## **Organizing Committee**

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