Introduction
Journeys of education and struggle:
African mobility in times of decolonization and the Cold War [1]

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In his classic novel of Sudan's post-colonial condition, Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ (1969[1966]) maps the trajectories and identity crises of two Sudanese men who studied in England and returned to the Sudan. The direction of these journeys confirmed a broader trend in Ṣāliḥ's generation. Given inadequate opportunities in the country, those aspiring to attend university had to go abroad. From Sudan, the road towards higher education might first pass through Egypt, but would usually lead to Great Britain. It was, as the novel's title said, the *Season of Migration to the North*. By the early 1960s, this season had already begun to give way to a new era. Following World War II, global Cold War rivalries became entangled with struggles for decolonization and competing efforts to bring about "development." This historical constellation opened up new channels to venture abroad and gain knowledge, qualifications and experiences. The destinations of these journeys were often still the former metropoles, but increasingly also a number of other countries that had no immediate history of colonial possessions including states of the socialist "East," countries of the capitalist "West" like Canada, Scandinavian states or West Germany, and postcolonial nations of the "South" like Egypt or India. Countries such as Tanzania took advantage of these new opportunities and sent young

citizens to attain educational credentials in dozens of countries. The unprecedented diversity of destinations and the growing number of people who could embark upon such journeys (also helped by new modes of transport like mass air travel) ushered in a new era of educational mobility on a global level. This special issue gathers contributions that further explore these interconnections with an emphasis on African perspectives and relations from and beyond the continent.

By studying concrete structures, instances and individual trajectories of overseas education, it becomes possible to comprehend what decolonization, the Cold War rivalries or development meant in different times and to different actors. Investigating educational journeys – and the institutional internationalization of education they were entwined with (Droux/Hofstetter 2014) – is useful not only to explore the history of elite formation or the emergence of new alliances, but also to pin down concrete circulations and transfers in a broader constellation of "North-South-East-West" relations (Grandner/Sonderegger 2015).

Like any social phenomenon, mobility is relational – embedded into power structures, regulative regimes, and inequalities – and closely associated with historically grown constellations of meanings and practices (Cresswell 2010). Mobility has long been a central aspect in African studies, albeit not necessarily under this term. Since the colonial era, researchers have dealt with spatial forms of mobility like pastoralism, wage labour migration and urbanization – usually, though not always in a perspective that implicitly rendered mobility as a threat to political and cultural hierarchies (Bilger/Kraler 2005). More recently, the social impacts (and appropriation) of new technologies, ideas and infrastructures, the gendered nature of mobilities and rural perspectives have also entered the realm of scholars' attention.[2]

While broader dynamics doubtlessly shaped African mobilities, the same was true vice versa: through their mobility, Africans intervened in and shaped these larger historical processes. This special issue is concerned with the nexus of mobility, education and struggle in the decades following World War II. Mobility refers to physical movement, but also the attainment

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[2] For a useful introduction to current publications on mobility in African historical contexts, see Kunkel 2017. A rich literature also exists, of course, on forced migration and the slave trade, aspects that are usually implicitly excluded by scholars working on "mobility."

of formal educational titles to climb up the social ladder. It also brings into focus exclusionary structures that close some avenues of mobility and thus render others more attractive, or necessary – the colonial "colour bar" or political exile being cases in point. In this sense, mobility is a productive heuristic tool to explore "African uses of the Cold War" (Alexander/ McGregor/Tendi 2017: 5) and to get insights into the connections between macro- and micro-dimensions of decolonization (James/Leake 2015, Milford 2017), liberation struggles and development policies.

Globalizing mobilities and gatekeeping states

To some, the interconnections discussed in this special issue might seem to be evidence for a process of global integration. However, as the contributions to this volume bear out, one should be cautious to jump to the conclusion that new connections and opportunities are evidence of a linear and unidirectional kind of "globalization" (Cooper 2002). Nor should an intensification of certain transcontinental connections in the realm of education be taken for granted. It is far from self-evident that certain people and institutions expand their field of agency: the global does not exist, it must be produced. If networks extend across new spaces and connections span to intercontinental reach, there must always be actors who actively construct and maintain these networks and imbue them with meaning (Gerstenberger/Glasman 2016: 15). The history of such networks comprises more actors than just powerful states competing to influence the mindset of African proto-elites. The institutionalization of educational exchanges was by no means only shaped by states; bottom-up initiatives, too, paved the way for thousands of overseas students and at times challenged reluctant states. The emergence of scholarship programmes from late 1950s East Africa (Shachtman 2010) to North America or from late 1970s South Africa to the United States (McClendon/Scully 2015) were, in fact, the outcome of the pioneering work of transnational anti-apartheid and anti-colonial activist networks. Several routes developed from clandestine networks or relations between non-state institutions, including unions, political parties and liberation movements, but also private companies, foundations, missions and other organizations based on religious or ethnic categories.

The establishment of new routes was often accompanied by visions of education as a tool for progress. Using a concept such as education, one has to come to terms with the role that education has played in establishing and

entrenching, but also undermining and challenging (neo-)colonial relations. "Education," "struggle" or "progress" take on very different meanings depending on whose perspective is being scrutinised. Ever since late colonialism and well into the early postcolonial period, institutionalised and formalised education figured as a main mechanism of social differentiation and was one of the most promising avenues for upward social mobility. At the same time, the legacies of systematic colonial neglect of higher education for Africans and local resource constraints meant that scholarships for destinations beyond the territory's borders were sought after.[3] The imposition of Western standards of education continues to shape global hierarchies. Yet the exchanges also reflected back on the host societies both in and beyond the African continent in other ways. Many anti-colonial struggles had some of their roots in diasporic exchanges in interwar London or Paris (Goebel 2015, Adi 1998), while the influx of a new generation of Africans and other foreign students in the 1950s and 1960s brought anti-colonialism back to the Europe and fuelled the internationalization and anti-imperialist outlook of the student movement (Seibert 2008, Slobodian 2012). The co-construction and multi-directionality evident in such exchanges leaves little room for dichotomous and ultimately flawed understandings of "providers" and "receivers" of education. In the same vein, assumptions that there was a diffusionist mechanism that made the benefits of education flow from benevolent super-powers and other states to underprivileged areas neglects the entangled, often reciprocal dimensions of educational mobilities. Colonial and white minority governments severely restricted both political activism and mobility (cf. Milford, Zalmanovich, this volume). The establishment of new educational institutions and scholarship programmes after World War II is a case in point: while they were meant to increase flows and transnational circulations (Tournés/Scott-Smith 2018), they also brought about new modes of control like the selection and testing of candidates. For those who decided to commit themselves to political struggles, this meant that they had to follow the "inevitable pipeline into exile", as it was called in the case of Namibians' outbound routes to Botswana (Müller 2012). Colonial policies thus often forced mobility upon people, also through taxation and the created need to enter the cash economy via labour migration. Postcolonial governments affirmed their

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[3] For a transnational treatment of higher education in colonial spaces see Charton 2017.

"gatekeeping" function inherited from the colonial state by governing the educational exchanges under the auspices of a human capital-based "manpower development" and enforcing border regimes that were, at times, more restrictive than pre-independence regulations.[4] An investigation of mobility thus needs to look at both new and accelerating connections as well as efforts to channel and control movement (Huber 2010, 2013), trying to identify the concrete actors and forces at work in these processes.

In geographical terms, much of the emerging scholarship on Africans' educational mobility during the Cold War has focussed on Eastern Europe and the socialist world at large (for an overview see Schenck, this volume). Post-secondary education in the socialist camp has received the lion's share of attention, including both analyses of institutions and channels of tertiary education (Katsakioris 2017, 2011; Kret 2013), as well as motives and overseas experiences of university students (Boltovskaja 2014, Burton 2016, Kurgat 2013, Matusevich 2009, Saint Martin et al. 2015). Sojourns in Western countries like those of Ghanaians in West Germany (Martin 2005) or Africans in France (Foster 2015, Guimont 1997) still deserve more attention, which is also true for South-South exchanges (Hatzky 2015). A geographical broadening should also be accompanied by enquiries that go beyond lecture halls, exploring the perspectives of groups other than students of tertiary institutions. This may include unionists (Harisch, this volume), members of youth organizations (Milford, this volume) and worker-trainees (Schenck 2016, van der Heyden/Strassburg 2014) as well as exchanges between women's organizations (Ghodsee 2014) or instances of party cadre, military and intelligence training during the Cold War (Alexander/McGregor 2017, Eugster 2016, Storkmann 2012).

These transcontinental perspectives from the dynamic field of research on overseas sojourns have much to gain from an equally vibrant body of Africanist scholarship on interrelations of mobility, exile and education on the continent (Panzer 2009, Terretta 2010, van Walraven 2005, Williams 2017). An articulation of these largely separate fields would help to overcome the artificial division of spheres which were very much connected in life trajectories. This becomes obvious in personal narratives but remains

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[4] On the concept of the "gatekeeper state" and its applicability beyond the colonial-postcolonial divide, see Cooper 2002. On African "manpower development" and overseas education, see Burton 2016.

obscure in the nationalist or institutionalist confines of most archives. The Zanzibari novelist Adam Shafi, for instance, left the teacher training college in 1959 – not too far from his graduation – to embark upon a clandestine journey that, he hoped, would eventually lead him to a British university. He worked and hustled in East Africa and the Sudan, was talked into guerrilla training in Egypt and returned to Zanzibar as a freedom fighter and anticolonial activist. Few months later, he departed again to attend a trade union course in East Germany (cf. Harisch, this volume). After independence and the 1964 revolution, he also enrolled in a journalist training in Czechoslovakia – and more twists might be added (Shafi 2013). Cosmopolitan biographies like Shafi's can hardly be generalized, but they flesh out the fluidity of seemingly self-contained and clear-cut categories like "student," "guerrilla," or "trade unionist," and the transformation of subjectivities and politicized understandings along the way. Recent work on Zanzibar and its cohort of socialist cosmopolitans is also an outstanding example of how a focus on mobility allows reframing and understanding political developments in late colonial and postcolonial Africa differently (Burgess 2007). Depending on historical conjunctures and highly contingent factors, university students assumed roles as proto-diplomats (especially in the run-up to independence and political conflicts like the Biafran War), exiles were pushed into roles as "refugees" or "freedom fighters," became "guerrillas" or "secondary school students" (on student movements and "Africa's 1968," see Blum/Guidi/Rillon 2016). All these terms, at times legally enforced and at times contested claims, were themselves associated with opportunity structures of learning and mobility. Some exiles could rise to decision-making positions or get scholarships for studies, military or vocational training overseas while others remained, immobilized, in the rank-and-file (White/Larmer 2014, Williams 2017). This issue thus advocates a broad and inclusive understanding of "education" that recognises these historical complexities and stands in contrast to an understanding of education that excludes military, political or trade unionist training, or only refers to formal settings.[5]

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[5] The thinking of Amílcal Cabral, for instance, very much shows how education and anticolonial struggles did bleed into each other, how knowledge was perceived as a battlefield, and theory as a "weapon" in these struggles (Cabral 1966). Thanks to Immanuel Harisch for pointing this out.

In her contribution to this volume, **Ismay Milford** makes the point that the "coming together of education and mobility stretched far beyond 'the scholarship' – and was constantly in flux." This finding rests upon her analysis of two-way processes of learning between East and Central African anticolonial activists and the *International Union of Socialist Youth* (IUSY), an organization of the democratic socialist and social democratic European left. Covering the decade from 1955 and 1965, Milford's examination of the IUSY-related networks hints at the multiplication of contacts as African anticolonial leaders approached, and were approached by, a number of established or recently formed international non-state organizations pursuing different interests. As Milford highlights, organizations like IUSY tapped into anticolonial activist networks of political exiles and students that had already emerged before, like those between East Africa and India. Consequently, "journeys of education" went both ways and enabled organizations like IUSY to learn more about the preferences and interests of actors in Africa – especially the importance they attached to anti-colonialism.

A central argument concerning the effects of transnational educational mobility has been that international support fuelled by Cold War competition was crucial in producing an "intelligentsia" in many African countries (Katsakioris 2017). Staunchly nationalist politicians or Western-minded bureaucrats in African countries sometimes took degrees from Moscow's *Lumumba University*, Leipzig's *Karl-Marx-University* or Prague's *University of 17th November* as supposed evidence of communist indoctrination or automatic belonging to "subversive" groups. Consequently, degrees and diplomas were no guarantee for social upward mobility: their value was contested, and returnees – women much more than men – had to fight to have their credibility recognised and translated into tangible gains. In such cases, returnees[6] were excluded from the inner circles of power and higher echelons of the developmentalist bureaucracies, especially where anti-Communist forces were at work (the reserve was

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[6] The assumption of the "return" is of course an essentializing understanding of the journeys discussed here as many trajectories involved re-migrations and unexpected sojourns. Such gaps between policies and lived realities need to be theorized beyond models still departing from a top-down logic such as the "brain drain" and human capital theory. A useful entry point for these discussions in a contemporary context is Åkesson/Eriksson Baaz 2015.

much less the case: Western education continued to enjoy prestige in self-proclaimed socialist and Marxist-Leninist states). The transferability and convertibility of educational credentials depended on the location and type of education: a university degree might open doors that remained closed for holders of a diploma from a trade union school. Methodologically, this implies that a quantitative approach – indicating, for instance, the rising numbers of African students in Western countries until the late 1970s[7] – is enormously helpful, but needs to find ways to work around the fact that data from African countries are scant. Even such numbers might say little about the actual "impact" in sending countries and even less about the meanings the sojourns had for the travellers themselves.

In his examination of African students' experiences at the East German trade union college ("*Hochschule*") in Bernau near Berlin, **Immanuel R. Harisch** finds that some of the course participants envisioned their sojourn as a "door-opener" and stepping stone to university studies on either side of the Iron Curtain. Only few managed to proceed directly, however, many returned to work in their home countries – and this came with its own challenges. Harisch interprets the letters which the graduates sent to East German personnel at the school as evidence of both an elevated status (as some indeed rose in the ranks) and persistent precarity as many of the unions or cooperatives continued to be severely underfunded or were politically marginalized. The article also foregrounds the balancing act of East German lecturers who struggled to adapt the studies to the needs of African unionists without taking off the ideological straitjacket of Marxism-Leninism – another instance of mutual learning and two-way education. While East German representatives also reacted to students' complaints about experiences of racism, the official position that all forms of discrimination were overcome in a socialist and declaredly anti-racist society prevented a serious engagement with the broader dimensions and causes of racism.

Multiple motives and new geographies

Reading African mobilities through the lens of an East-West rivalry is but one possibility of global embeddedness. One has to note, however, that

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[7] In the United Kingdom, the apex was reached in 1978 (10,276 students from sub-Saharan Africa in the country in this year); in the US, in 1979 (29,142); in France, in 1984 (31,514); and in the USSR, in 1990 (23,809) (Katsakioris 2017: 277).

from the perspective of travellers, it often mattered much more to go "North" rather than going "East" or "West": system competition was a minor concern to many nationalist activists, students or politicians from Africa who tried to use, rather than subject to, the dichotomies surrounding the mental maps of the Cold War. One may go further and frame these crossings cutting across and going beyond superpower competition as products and catalysts of alternative geographies. In this framework, studying African mobility during the Cold War gives further insights into how "both the Iron Curtain and the borders of the Black Atlantic were more porous than often assumed, offering contact zones for interconnection" and turning Europe's Communist nations – as well as many other places – into "points of reference, places of education, and ports of exile" (Mark/Slobodian 2018: n.p.). The educational ties between African countries like Angola or Mozambique and Cuba, for instance, may be interpreted to have brought into existence a "Red Atlantic" (Dorsch 2011; cf. Hatzky 2015), a space with both imaginative and material dimensions.

In her research note, **Marcia C. Schenck** ponders the concept of a "Black East" as another category that may cut across Cold War dichotomies and help to rethink African mobilities and their global impact. The socialist connections greatly changed the spatial orders and destinations of educational journeys – and this not only for elites. For Mozambicans or Angolans, Schenck writes, "the global rise of socialism flattened the geography and led to Havana, East Berlin, Prague, or Moscow becoming likely destinations for students, workers, politicians, and experts from all over the continent; it was thus more likely that a young Mozambican school child would receive its education in geographically distant Cuba or the GDR than in neighbouring South Africa or Rhodesia." In her own work on Mozambican and Angolan migrants to East Germany, Schenck has demonstrated with a sophisticated use of oral history methodology that individual decisions to migrate cannot be reduced to a reflex responding to structural factors and channels of mobility provided by states or other institutions. Pointing out the complexity of motives, she finds that these students and worker-trainees "were as much educational migrants, war migrants, aspirational migrants and emotional migrants as they were labor migrants" (Schenck 2016: 204). Todd Cleveland recently made a similar point about footballers from colonial Angola and Mozambique who travelled to Portugal in the decades before the routes to the "Black East"

had opened up: not only did they play football and lead Portuguese clubs and the Portuguese national (or rather, imperial) team to new heights, they also employed long-term strategies by enrolling in degree programmes and pursuing careers in other professions. As one of the players interviewed by Cleveland put it, "no one achieved financial independence from [just] playing soccer" (Cleveland 2017:7).

These insights about multiple motives and coexisting strategies of mobility are confirmed and extended by **Svetlana Boltovskaja**'s contribution on African students in the Soviet Union. Based on oral history interviews and personal memoirs and in line with the findings of Schenck and other authors working with personal narratives, Boltovskaja shows that educational migration did not exclude other purposes. Focussing on mobility and economic agency, Boltovskaja shows how African students became petty traders: engaging in movements that went against official Soviet efforts to police the inflow of goods and ideas, they used their freedom to cross the Iron Curtain and import goods that Soviets were craving for. At the same time, however, these activities also reinforced resentments in the Soviet population derived from privileges of foreign students (including, apart from the freedom to travel, stipends that outstripped local doctors' salaries) and pervasive everyday racism. African students' economic niche dissolved as Gorbachev's perestroika ushered in liberalization policies that allowed Soviet citizens to travel and open their own businesses. Boltovskaja's account gives empirical substance to a joke that circulated through the Cold War world. It referred to the transformation through overseas studies, saying that "if you want a socialist, send them to a Western country", "if you want a capitalist, send them to study to the Soviet Union or to Cuba."[8] The analysis of business-like practices across the Iron Curtain vividly shows that it was perhaps not the supposed evils of communism that turned some students into "capitalists," as the joke seems to imply, but rather their own creative strategies to turn the inequalities and interstices between planned and market economies into personal economic gains.

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[8] This joke came in several varieties adapted to local context – in Francophone settings, for instance, Paris would be mentioned as specific location in the West. The quote is taken from a 2014 interview with a Tanzanian engineer who studied in the United States, cited in Burton 2016: 102.

Processes of learning comprised much more than what authorities envisaged or were able to control. The "journeys of hope" often also went beyond what individuals themselves expected (Matusevich 2008). These aspects of serendipity and unforeseen twists and turns should not be eclipsed but highlighted. In her contribution to this volume, **Tal Zalmanovich** examines the "communist transnational infrastructure" connecting South African activists with Eastern Europe in the early 1950s by following the trajectory of Pauline Podbrey and H.A. Naidoo, a couple that had to leave apartheid South Africa because the regime's new legislation targeted them not only for their trade unionist activities, but also because of their "mixed" marriage. Following a sojourn in London, the British Communist Party sent the couple to Hungary to work as English language broadcasters for *Radio Budapest*. The couple would stay for over three years, but they were quickly frustrated by the dreary kind of propaganda in which they engaged and shocked about discriminatory practices against Roma people betraying what they held as socialist principles. Zalmanovich's contribution shows how their faith in Stalinism and the Communist Party eroded and eventually led to a withdrawal from the political arena. A heavy blow were the events surrounding Stalin's death in 1953 and the unwillingness of comrades in London to hear the critical conclusions they had drawn from their experiences in really existing socialism behind the Iron Curtain. Zalmanovich reads Podbrey's and Naidoo's itinerary at the intersection of Cold War transnational networks and apartheid policies as evidence of the fragmentation of activist biographies that contrasts the post-apartheid narrative of triumph and success.

Sources, potentials, caveats

The contributions to this volume show manifold – and sometimes unexpected – entanglements between East, West, and South. They also hint at the gendered and racialized character of experiences, opportunities and exclusionary structures, aspects which deserve to be scrutinized further. In the case of those who went voluntarily, the attraction of foreign lands often owed much to the wish to be on the sunnier side of global inequalities as well as local processes of social differentiation and class-building. Not only for this reason, the methical bias of transnational and global methodologies to emphasize mobilities should be socially grounded and

detail how migrating minorities related to immobile majorities (Osterhammel 2010: 183), and immobility in general.[9]

Authors working on these relations can profit from the accessibility of rich archival repositories (Pugach 2016). The opening of archives in post-socialist countries of the former Eastern bloc in particular led to a veritable gold rush among historians and was a crucial factor for the birth of the genre of *New Cold War Histories* and the accounts of "Third World students" in state socialism mentioned above. There is, however, a caveat in singling out mobilities from Africa to Europe – even if Western Europe and other Western countries were to receive more attention in the future. Relying on European archival sources carries a risk of overemphasising the importance of Europe-bound routes to the detriment of other paths. This applies to trans-local routes within Africa as well as transregional journeys crossing the "Black Atlantic," the Indian Ocean or the Red Sea. Jonathan Miran (2015), for instance, has detailed how tens of thousands of West African pilgrims made their way, often on clandestine routes, from West Africa to Mecca between the 1920s and 1950s. Authorities were eager to control such mobilities. Amadou Dramé (2018) is currently working on official efforts to monitor and limit student migration from Senegal to Arab-Muslim countries, investigating how responses of both colonial and postcolonial governments were driven by fears that scholarly ties towards North Africa and the Middle East might endanger the monopoly of Western education.

Deploying oral history techniques and engaging a small, but growing body of memoirs is crucial: As cultural anthropologist Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2013: 653) argued, "mobility is more appropriately studied as an emotional, relational and social phenomenon as reflected in the complexities, contradictions and messiness of the everyday realities of encounters informed by physical and social mobility." Personal narratives, tin-trunk archives and audio-visual sources such as photos and films are thus invaluable to get to these dimensions of mobility, as are novels such as Ṣāliḥ's *Season of Migration to the North*, or Souleyanta Ndiaye's *Tavarich Gaye*, discussed in Boltovskaja's article. Both novels are informed by their author's own experiences.

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[9] A previous special issue of this journal dealt with movements and mobility through a focus on immobility. It highlighted the importance of "sojourns along the way" and the productive character of moments of waiting and being stuck (Rüther/Waldburger 2015).

In sum, studying structures, instances and itineraries of overseas education contributes to a fuller comprehension of what decolonization, the Cold War or policies of "manpower development" and cultural cooperation meant in practice. Through the prism of African mobility and the examination of new institutions, educational programmes, new connections and personal trajectories, this special issue provides a fresh perspective on the entangled histories of decolonization, "development," and system competition. It enables us to see how young men and women saw the world, seized opportunities, fought against injustices, pursued their interests with or against broader historical currents and contributed to processes which continue to shape our contemporary world. Recognizing the contradictory character and manifold effects of past mobilities may also help to reframe current circulations and migrations as being something much more complicated than another *Season of Migration to the North*.

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