Introduction

Living in Niger over several years in the 2000s, I was faced with an intriguing puzzle: while the sedentarization of nomadic pastoralists and a decrease in pastoralist mobility was a current issue, the society as a whole was becoming increasingly mobile. This book asks how this second, more general, trend is linked to the first: how do sedentarization processes among nomads translate in terms of actual mobility? What are the new forms of mobility that emerge in the context of alternative livelihood activities such as work migration, which is a significant phenomenon in many pastoral societies today, and how are they linked to the rapidly developing facilities of public transport? What does such change in mobility patterns imply for the relations of pastoralists to space and place? What are its wider consequences in terms of social group formation and collective identification, for questions of integration into the wider society and the structures of the modern nation state, and with regard to social and cultural reproduction? These questions are pursued by analysing the case of the Woɗaaɓe, a group of Fulɓe pastoralists who had once been an almost paradigmatic case of highly mobile cattle nomads, but who are today characterized by sedentarization and livelihood diversification, based mainly on agro-pastoralism and urban work migration.

It was rather per chance that, immediately after my first arrival in Niger in 2004, I became closely acquainted with an urban-based Woɗaaɓe family. Taafa Buuyo, the head of this family, had worked as a watchman for the previous tenant of my house in Diffa, a provincial capital in the extreme east of the country, where I would work on a project for conflict prevention and resource management. In Niger, as in other African countries, it is customary for Western expatriates to employ watchmen at private domiciles. At the time, there was no obvious need to have them, since the security situation in Diffa was comparatively relaxed then, but the employment of watchmen was an established custom and had become an important sector of local employment. Taafa and his family were living in a small house on my compound, hoping for a new work contract upon my arrival. We thus lived in close proximity and I soon spent most of my spare time with this family, sharing meals, tea and company. Over time, our relation developed into friendship. What drew us close to each other – despite our cultural and economic differences – might also have been the fact that we were both work migrants far from home: Taafa originated from the distant Zinder province and, apart from his immediate family, did not have any relatives in Diffa.

By and by, I became familiar with Taafa's life story. As with many other Woɗaaɓe, he had abandoned the pastoralist livelihood as a young man to work as a watchman in different cities across Niger and Nigeria. Although far removed from his wider family, he was in no way isolated from them, but imbedded in a tight lineage network. I understood that his urban activities were part of a joint strategy to sustain the extended family's pastoral economy. Taafa regularly sent parts of his earnings home to his younger brother who invested them in animals, and despite the distance, Taafa regularly returned to his pastoral home camp for visits. Over the years, he had worked for different European expatriates, which had enabled him to establish a social network that constituted an important economic backdrop. Later, I realized that Taafa's story combined elements that were recurring themes in contemporary Woɗaaɓe biographies and that similar life stories as his could be found in greater number among his lineage mates. His case exemplified the significance of both translocal kinship-networks and networks with Westerners, which were to become an important focus of my research – and of which I had myself become a part.

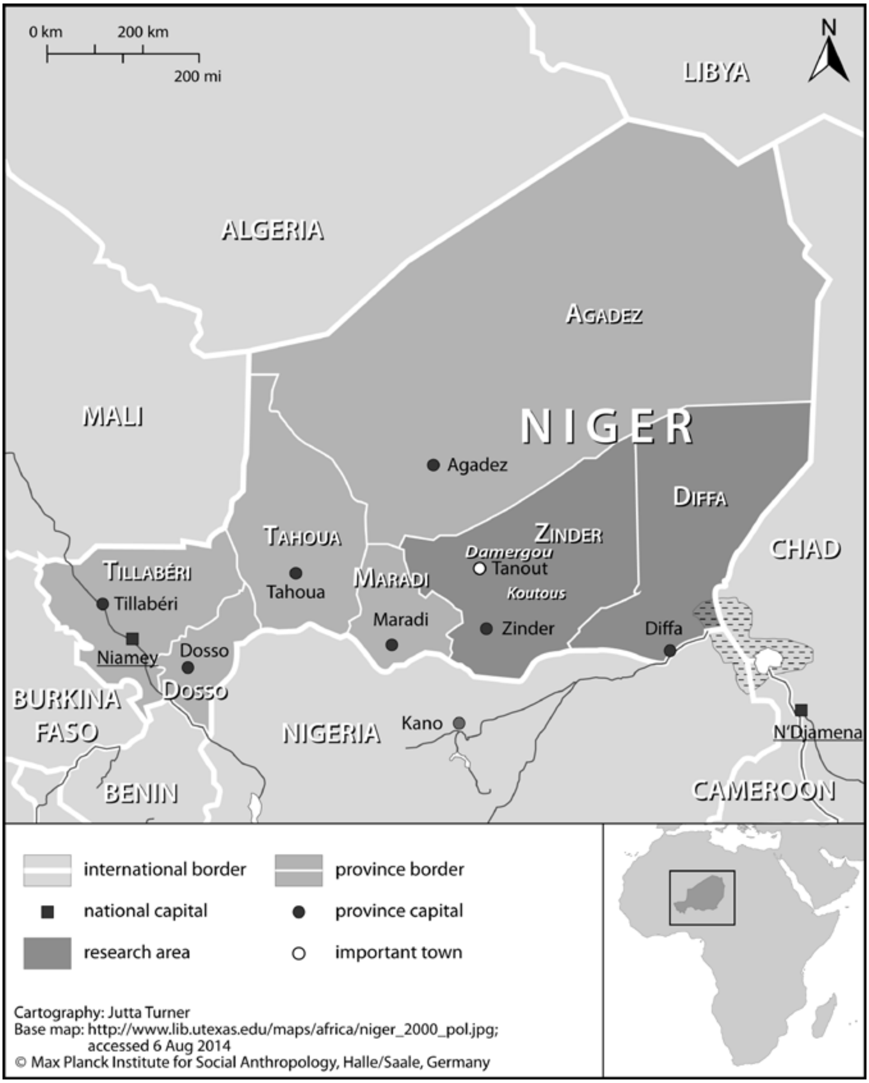
After three years in Diffa, I left Niger, but came back a year later to work on a similar project, this time in the city of Zinder. Taafa still had employment in Diffa, but since many members of his extended family lived in Zinder as migrant workers or as stranded drop-outs of the pastoral economy, I was soon addressed by Taafa's half-brother (FS), Baji, who asked for work as a watchman. His family thus moved to my compound and I learned that the situation in Zinder was quite different from what I had experienced in Diffa. Not only was there an urban migrant community of Baji's lineage living in Zinder, the city was also a waypoint between the pastoral areas of the Damergou and Koutous regions, where the families of most Woɗaaɓe migrants in Zinder live, and the city of Kano, in northern Nigeria, which also attracts significant numbers of Woɗaaɓe migrant workers from Niger. As a result, many friends and relatives of Baji soon regularly spent their days and sometimes longer periods on my compound – migrants in transit to or from Kano, or lineage mates who had come to town and were looking for work but had momentarily no place to stay. I thus quickly learned more about their lives – their experiences, aspirations and challenges – in which I became more and more interested.

The wish to record the history and to document the contemporary condition of this particular group of Woɗaaɓe thus developed gradually over years during the course of my close acquaintance with those who were my principal company when I first tried to make a home in Niger, and who were to become my principal interlocutors in the context of anthropological research in the proper sense, on which I finally embarked in November 2010.

The Woɗaaɓe of Niger

Niger is a landlocked state in the West African Sahel. The young and fast-growing population of about 17 million, according to a census from 2012 (Republic of the Niger 2013), is concentrated in the relatively fertile south-west, while the vast arid north is characterized by the Sahara desert that covers over 80 per cent of the country's land area. Niger is regularly assessed as one of the poorest countries in the world: in the 2013 UN Human Development Index, it was ranked last of 187 countries (UNDP 2014). Apart from the extraction and exportation of raw materials, notably uranium and, since recently, petroleum, the economy of Niger is still dominated by subsistence agriculture and livestock rearing, the latter notably in the form of pastoralism of a varying degree of mobility.

The Woɗaaɓe (sg. Boɗaaɗo) are part of the large group of Fulɓe who are today dispersed in wide parts of West-Africa, and to a lesser degree across the whole continent, from Senegal (Dupire 1970) to Ethiopia and Sudan (Braukämper 1992; Delmet 1994, 2000; Feyissa and Schlee 2009; Schlee 1997, 2000b, 2011, 2012, 2013a), and Central Africa (Boutrais 1990). The cultural differentiation between different Fulɓe groups has historically been very pronounced, ranging from nomadic pastoralist and sedentary agro-pastoralist groups, to warrior aristocrats, Islamic scholars and founders of emirates. Within the total population of the Fulɓe, which, in more recent writing, has been estimated at about sixteen million (Diallo 2008: 7), the Woɗaaɓe represent only a small minority. According to estimates from the 1980s and 1990s, their number in Niger then amounted to approximately 100,000 (Bonfiglioli 1988: 12; Paris 1997).[1] While smaller populations can be found in Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and the Central African Republic, but even as far east as Sudan (Mohamadou 1969: 72; Osman 2013), and as far west as Senegal (Faliu 1980; Kane 2004), the majority of Woɗaaɓe live in the Republic of Niger, predominantly as mobile pastoralists specialized in the breeding of zebu cattle. In the course of their migration to increasingly northern regions of the Nigerien Sahel, and in reaction to historic processes, notably the Fulɓe Jihad in the nineteenth century and later the French colonization and the gradual extension of agricultural lands, the Woɗaaɓe have, since the end of the nineteenth century, developed the high degree of nomadic mobility which has since then remained characteristic (Braukämper 1971; Bonfiglioli 1988; Boesen 2004a: 212, 2007a: 31, 2007b: 209f.).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Cartography: Jutta Turner
Base map: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/niger_2000_pol.jpg; accessed 6 Aug 2014
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Map 0.1 The study region.

The pastoral Woɗaaɓe are organized in loose migration groups, formed by a varying number of households. These kinship-based groups of patrilineal descent conceive of themselves as segments of more complex lineages and clans (Dupire 1970: 303). The different clans, and in many cases even the segments of one clan do not live in spatial proximity, but are dispersed over important distances and sometimes isolated one from another. A rather vague notion of the unity of the group is being maintained through a network of relations between regional clan segments, but institutions or occasions that would unite the Woɗaaɓe as a whole across clans do not exist (Dupire 1962: 319; 1970: 300f.). In the absence of any central political institution, the most important political function is that of the *arđo* (pl.: *arduɓe*). Originally a pastoral leader and a political and moral authority on the level of a clan segment, he is nowadays attributed administrative functions by the state. The authority of an *arđo* is based solely on his personal qualities as a leader, and any family head can at any moment withdraw his allegiance to follow another *arđo.* Decisions concerning interior affairs of the clan or between clans are taken communally by a council of elders.

The most important institution for maintaining inter-clan relations are ceremonial meetings (*ngaanka*), which take place at the end of the rainy season on the basis of reciprocal visits between two clans or their regional segments. By fostering exogamous inter-clan marriages (*te'egal*) and thus translating inter-clan relations into kinship ties, these meetings are an important tool for strengthening the cohesion of the otherwise fragmented ethnic group. Paradoxically, this is achieved by what are perceived as acts of aggression, since the clan-exogamous *te'egal* marriages are by principle arranged with women who, in their own clan, are already married, generally by clan-endogamous betrothal from early childhood (*kooɓgal*-marriage). The *ngaanka* ceremonies are thus an arena in which two clans ritually approve of mutual *te'egal* elopement marriage and lay the basis for it by exposing married women and men to each other during male dance contests, for which the Woɗaaɓe are probably best known in the West (Dupire 1970: 67; Paris 1997; Boesen 2008a). Although forms of elopement marriage are known among other groups of pastoral Fulɓe as well (e.g. Bocquené 1986: 247ff.; Burnham 1996: 111f.; Reed 1932: 433), the particularity of Woɗaaɓe *te'egal* marriage is that it occurs within a formalized regulatory framework based on inter-clan agreements that, generally speaking, sanction the practice between clans and ban it from within one clan. These inter-clan agreements are the principal issue at stake in *ngaanka*, and ultimately, the participation of a group in the network of ceremonial and marital relations is what defines Woɗaaɓe ethnic identity and group membership.

Since the 1970s and especially since the 1980s, as a result of animal losses after recurring droughts in the Sahel region, many Woɗaaɓe have taken up work migration to regional urban centres (Maliki et al. 1984; Loftsdóttir 2000, 2002a, 2004; Boesen 2004a, 2007a). Income from migrant work has become a significant economic factor and in many cases the pastoral economy has today been transformed into a mixed system subsidized by urban revenues (Boesen 2007b: 210). Social networks being of major importance for finding paid labour, different professional specializations among migrant workers can be more or less associated with clan groups (Loftsdóttir 2000: 249f.; Boesen 2004a: 215). The Woɗaaɓe Gojanko'en in the Zinder province, on whom my research focused, have for a long time been particularly well positioned in the job market for watchmen at expatriates' homes and offices in the provincial capital Zinder. The second important city to which they migrate is Kano in northern Nigeria.

Most major works on the Woɗaaɓe have put a strong emphasis on aspects of 'traditional' pastoral nomadic culture and livelihood. This holds true not only for the classic monographs by Stenning (1959) and Dupire (1962), and for Bonfiglioli's seminal *Duɗal* (Bonfiglioli 1988), but also for more recent contributions such as those by Schareika (2003a) on environmental knowledge, Krätli (2007) on resource management in cattle breeding, or Loncke (2015) on song and dance. Although anthropologists, in particular Boesen (2004a, 2007a, 2007b, 2010) and Loftsdóttir (2000, 2001a, 2002a, 2004), have also addressed complementary economic strategies outside pastoralism and the new forms of mobility which they entail, little effort has been made to analyse them in a comprehensive way, i.e. to explore the systemic logic in the interplay of different economic activities both in the rural and the urban sphere, and of the different actors involved in them. One aim of this book is to fill this gap, based on the premise that the (agro-)pastoral and the urban context are today complementary spheres of Woɗaaɓe social and economic activities, closely linked by multiple ties of mobility. I argue that for understanding the dynamics characterizing this society today, it is indispensable to analyse not only these two contexts, but in particular the complex and multiple translocal relations between them.

The Study Group and Central Research Questions

As the perspective of conducting anthropological research in this context became more concrete and I pursued my investigations, I soon learned that the migration of this group of Woɗaaɓe into the Zinder province occurred rather recently, in the early 1970s. Also, they constituted only a relatively small section of their clan, the Gojanko'en, the majority of whom today live in the Ader region of central Niger. Within this small group, economic diversification covered a wide spectrum from pastoralism of different degrees of mobility to agro-pastoralism and urban work migration. Individuals moved flexibly between the different economic models and between the urban and the rural realm. Ultimately, this diversity of different livelihood models that coexist today within a relatively small faction of a Woɗaaɓe clan seemed to offer a reasonable framework for research. I thus made the Gojanko'en in the province of Zinder my principal group of investigation (henceforth called the study group). I put a focus on both rural areas (Damergou and Koutous regions) and urban locations (Zinder), and I used existing contacts to Woɗaaɓe from other clans and regions, in Diffa and Tahoua provinces, to collect comparative data.

I learned that the study group's migration to the Damergou region was only one move in a long history of migrations – and hardly the end-point, as the most recent migration of one small faction from the Damergou to the Koutous region indicates. Mobility was a central issue in more than one regard: in the context of pastoral migrations and pastoral day-to-day mobility, in the form of a more recent rural–urban mobility, and in the form of the socio-economic mobility, or flexibility, that it takes for switching between these different spheres and between different livelihood strategies. However, I also learned that in parallel to this continuing thread of mobility and migration, there was a more recent and seemingly rather opposite tendency of sedentarization of pastoral Woɗaaɓe in the vicinity of wells, which has led, in recent years, to an increasing differentiation of the regional clan community along different points of local attachment. This trend towards territorial fixation can be understood as a strategy for securing legal rights over resources, and as an attempt at selective integration into state structures in order to be included in processes of resource distribution by governmental and non-governmental development programmes. It must be seen in the light of contemporary developments within Nigerien society as a whole – particularly urbanization and the periodically massive presence of international aid-organizations – which have had an enormous impact on the society.

These facts opened the perspective on two major issues that were to become central points of reference for my research: (1) the aspects of mobility and migration (both in the pastoral and in the urban context), and the processes of placemaking and local attachment which they entail; (2) processes of social group formation and collective identification.

Among the Woɗaaɓe, mobility and migration go together with processes of group formation. Social groups form in a continuous process of reconfiguration, following a double and inverse pattern of fission or disjunction of descent groups, on the one hand, and affiliation or fusion of local groups after periods of co-residence or coordinated mobility within a particular area, on the other (Dupire 1962; Bonfiglioli 1988). This pattern of group formation induces processes of collective identification based on differentiation and redefinitions of internal boundaries, and others, based on the constant renegotiation of external boundaries that the migration experience, both in the pastoral and in the modern urban context entails.

In his classic work *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Fredrik Barth (1969) showed how group identities are shaped not in isolation of one group, but in confrontation with others along boundaries that are constructed in this process. Although Barth's use of 'boundary', i.e. a spatial metaphor, for what is in fact an ideological social construction has been much criticized (Cohen 2000; Wood 2009), the concept can nonetheless fruitfully be applied today if the boundary is not regarded as a fixed spatial barrier, but as a dynamic and situational interface with the other (Burnham 1996: 161f.). Crucial group interfaces that define and shape the possible identification categories of a Boɗaaɗo have to be analysed both on the external level (interfaces between ethnic groups) and on the internal level (interfaces between the segments of Woɗaaɓe society on different levels).

One central research question thus concerns identification processes in a context of mobility and migration, and the roles that space and place, or locality, play in this process. Different places provide different constellations of neighbourhood and interfaces with other groups and hence, potentially produce different identities. This is doubly relevant in the context of this study: First, the Fulɓe are a paradigmatic case of a group that, over the course of its history, was characterized by high mobility and continent-wide migration, and had to redefine its identities along ever new constellations of neighbourhood with various cultural others (Diallo and Schlee 2000; Schlee 2011). Second, the context of urban migration is of particular interest for an analysis of identification processes because it offers, in a nutshell, permanent interface situations in the sense of Barth's group boundaries along which processes of identity formation and (re-) negotiation unfold. The multi-ethnic context of the city works as a catalyst for identification processes, because the close neighbourhood with ethnic others entails a constant contestation of group identities and thus requires a constant re-negotiation of identity and difference, of belonging and otherness (Schlee 2013b). Another question concerns the impact that the exposure to a modern urban lifestyle and the resulting culture change in the contemporary condition have on questions of cultural reproduction and cultural continuity.

The issue of spatiality is also of significance for the reproduction of social groups in a highly mobile society: how is a social group maintained as a community over spatial distance, and what is the role of places and placemaking in this context? The issue of connectedness over space in a dispersed community introduces several concepts that need to be defined, notably 'community' and 'locality', and 'translocality'.

The Translocal Production of Community

The terms 'translocality' and 'translocalism' have variously been used since Arjun Appadurai (1995: 216) proposed a better understanding of the processes of 'production and reproduction of locality' in a context of increasing global mobility with the term 'translocalities'. More recently, 'translocality' has become a catchword for researchers from various disciplines concerned with the phenomena of migration, mobility, transfer and spatial interconnectedness (Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013: 373), yet the use of the term is often characterized by a relative vagueness (Ben Arrous 2004; Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013). While, generally speaking, the concept refers to processes and relations that span different locales, owing to the recent career of the term in social sciences, the different nuances of meaning that it carries merit a closer look.

On the one hand, using the concept of translocality presupposes an understanding of the notion of 'locality'. In a first, more elementary sense, the term refers to a spatial form, a place in the geographic space. A second, more sociological use of the term applies it to a form of sociality. Appadurai (1995: 222) has argued in this sense that locality is negotiated and socially ‘produced’, and thus ‘primarily relational and contextual, rather than scalar or spatial’ (ibid.: 204). Appadurai admits that ‘[t]here is no ideal way to designate “localities” as actual social forms’ (ibid.: 222), and he proposes the term ‘neighbourhood’ which, however, does evoke a specific spatial location. The term ‘community’, by contrast, has the advantage of not being locally but rather interactionally defined (De Jong 1999). It has been argued that ‘the apparently immediate experience of community is in fact inevitably constituted by a wider set of social and spatial relations’ (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b: 7) and that ‘communities can exist without being in the same place’ (Massey 1994: 153), i.e. as translocal communities. This has become an important position in social sciences due to the fact that today ‘the geography of social relations is changing’, in many cases being ‘increasingly stretched out over space’ (ibid.: 154).

On the other hand, translocality must be understood in close relation with the better-established concept of transnationalism (Freitag and von Oppen 2010: 5). The debate on transnationalism in migration studies has made an important contribution to shifting the focus from viewing migrants as uprooted and disconnected from their home communities to stressing their connectedness with their countries and regions of origin (Basch et al. 1995; Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Hahn and Klute 2007). They continue to engage with the places they have left behind (Hedberg and do Carmo 2012: 3) and they are often simultaneously situated across different locales (Brickell and Datta 2011: 4), thus forging identities of multiple belonging (Greiner 2010: 135). However, while transnationalist approaches, as the term implies, have put a strong focus on nation-states and the borders between them, the latter can be rather arbitrary and in some contexts highly irrelevant. It has also been pointed out that transnational practices ‘are actually embodied in relations which are situated in specific local contexts’ (Brickell and Datta 2011: 9). This led to a new focus in transnational studies on the situatedness of migrants and on local–local relations, and eventually to a development towards a more grounded transnationalism, or, ‘transnationalism from below’ (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Authors began to stress the simultaneous mobility *and* locatedness of migrants, and put a greater emphasis on migrants’ agency (Brickell and Datta 2011: 9). Gradually, the concepts of ‘translocality’ or ‘translocalism’ emerge from these discussions; the discourse on ‘transnational migration’ is increasingly complemented by the terms ‘translocal migration’ and ‘transmigration’ (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995). With this shift of focus, the translocality approach widens the scope to include aspects of internal or regional migration which had been neglected by transnational approaches and migration studies (Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013: 374), although they are of growing importance, notably in Africa (e.g. Adepoju 1995; Aina 1995; Salih 1995; Rain 1999; de Bruijn et al. 2001; Marfaing 2014a). The translocality approach thus builds up on the insights of transnational migration studies and widens the concept rather than rejecting it (Freitag and von Oppen 2010: 13; Hedberg and do Carmo 2012; Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013: 374f.).

While the concept of translocality is generally used in contemporary migration contexts, it can arguably also be relevant for an analysis of mobile pastoralist societies such as the Woɗaaɓe, e.g. in terms of social networks expanding across places, or processes of exchange and transfers (Freitag and von Oppen 2005: 2). Translocal orientation is not *per se* a modern phenomenon, but merely more accentuated in the contemporary condition of increasing global exchanges and flows. In a similar vein, de Bruijn and Brinkman (2011: 51) have called nomadic societies '[m]obile communities *avant la lettre*': 'The Fulani do not define their community in geographical space but in social relations that expand to cover large geographical areas, i.e. strings of people' (ibid.: 52). Similar arguments have been made with regard to mobile communities in other geographical contexts.[2] In the Sahel, translocality has even been suggested to be a more general feature that concerns not only mobile pastoralists but to some extent all parts of the population (Retaillé and Walther 2012: 19). Although not explicitly under the label of translocality, the debates on 'cultures of migration' (Hahn and Klute 2007) or 'cultures of mobility' (Boesen 2004b: 107, 2007b: 213f.; Boesen and Marfaing 2007) in the Sahara-Sahel region point into a similar direction: Mobility and translocal livelihood patterns are a common part of Sahelian identities (Rain 1999; de Bruijn et al. 2001: 69; de Bruijn and van Dijk 2003; de Bruijn 2007; Boesen 2007b: 213f.; Retaillé 2010, 2013), or of a '*condition* [*Saharo-*] *Sahélienne*' (Gallais 1975; Boesen and Marfaing 2006).

Hence, while recent migration research has been particularly interested in understanding how questions of identity and difference are spatialized in new ways in a time of increasing deterritorialization of cultural difference (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b), in this book I examine these questions in a Sahelian group of mobile pastoralists for whom deterritorialization and translocality are not new phenomena but rather a cultural constant. I argue that in contemporary Woɗaaɓe society, translocal orientation has several dimensions. On the one hand, translocal aspects are readily visible in the context of urban work migration that has become a significant phenomenon since the major droughts of the 1980s. Migrants generally maintain close contacts with their home communities, which remain a strong focus of social orientation, and translocal kinship-networks connect actors belonging to the same home community who are dispersed across different sites (Chapter 9). In the specific case of the study group, a further level of translocal orientation is of importance: It emerges from networks with Western expatriates that originate in the urban migrant context yet also have a strong impact on migrants' pastoral home communities. As I will show in Chapter 7, these networks are economically significant as they involve transfers of material and immaterial goods. On the other hand, however, long before urban migrant work became a relevant phenomenon, translocal community structures emerged from the patterns of pastoral mobility that, in the scarce environment of the Sahel, demand a relative dispersal of social groups for a substantial part of the year cycle. In addition, a network of translocal relations between clan groups is the very basis for the constitution of the Woɗaaɓe as an ethnic group (see Chapter 10).

Social Space and Place

Although the Woɗaaɓe pastoral strategy of constantly reaching out for better pastures in order to optimize herd fertility and performance (Maliki 1981; Schareika 2003a, 2003b; Krätli 2007, 2008) entails a tendency of constant migration, this does not mean that at the same time there is not an attachment to specific places. As social beings, people are entangled in both translocal kinship networks and local neighbourhood ties. In fact, it is precisely this interplay of transcending places and becoming attached to new ones that makes the translocal dimension palpable. If translocality is concerned with both mobility and places, while putting a focus neither on the one nor on the other, but rather on the relation between the two (Freitag and von Oppen 2005: 3, 2010: 4; Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013: 380), we have to define the concepts of place (and space) in a context of mobility. Several more recent conceptualizations of space and place, both in the social sciences and human geography, as (1.) relational and socially constructed and (2.) mobile and dynamic rather than fixed seem relevant and helpful as part of an approach to studying translocal phenomena and placemaking processes in a highly mobile society.

Important references for most theoreticians of space as socially constructed are the works of Lefebvre and de Certeau. Lefebvre (1991 [1974]: 101) distinguishes between natural space, which merely juxtaposes things and living beings, and social space, which is the product of encounters, simultaneity and assembly at or around particular places. Similarly, for de Certeau, space is a 'practiced place' (1984: 117). It is produced by human social practice. While, in this fundamentally social understanding of space and space-production, place is still conceptualized as fixed and spatially defined, more recent approaches also regard place itself as socially and relationally constituted.

Ingold's (2007, 2009) concept of placemaking by 'wayfaring' is of particular interest here. For Ingold, wayfaring is particularly well exemplified in the mobility of nomads and hunter-gatherers, but ultimately it is a fundamental characteristic of human existence. Human movement is constant and leaves a 'trail' (2009: 33). Places are constituted by the convergence of human movement. Where people meet, their entangled trails form 'knots' (ibid.). The process of wayfaring, i.e. the progressive course of human existence, is thus characterized as fundamentally 'place-making' (2007: 101)

Massey (1994, 2005) also conceptualizes places not as localized entities, but as relationally defined. They are points of intersection and encounter, 'articulated moments in networks of social relations' (1994: 154). Massey puts a particular emphasis on the network of social relations and interconnections that stretch beyond the boundaries of a physical place itself, which she defines as relational or social space (2005: 184). A similar idea is expressed by Olwig, for whom 'social practices, processes and interaction can expand beyond single places, thus manifesting a more encompassing place that can be of regional or even global dimensions' (1997: 4).

In the same vein, Sheller and Urry underline the 'complex relationality of places and persons connected through performances' (2006: 214). Places are defined by the 'copresence' (ibid.) of people who are simultaneously in the same place and engaged in interaction. Here, time becomes a central variable for the definition of place, which is regarded as temporary and ephemeral.

This is also the position of French geographer Retaillé, whose 'mobile space' model is of particular relevance also because it was developed on the basis of field work in the same regional context as ours, i.e. the Koutous region of Niger (Retaillé 1984, 2013). Based on his observation that in the highly mobile Sahelian societies a place – be it a nomadic camp or a village – can 'move within a given spatial structure and yet keep its intrinsic properties' (Retaillé and Walther 2011: 89), Retaillé asks what defines place in a mobile social space. He concludes that a place itself can move (Retaillé 2013: 63) and, not unlike Ingold, argues that movement is even fundamental to place. Places are junctions where people and things that are constantly in motion meet (ibid.: 55). Since movement is constant, however, 'spatial differentiations between places are constantly at work' (Retaillé and Walther 2012: 18), and place itself becomes a mobile conception.

Such non-static and processual concepts of place and space seem particularly useful for understanding the translocal social networks of Woɗaaɓe both in the pastoral and the urban migrant context, and their realizations through mobility and movement. Placemaking can thus be understood as the social process by which (geographical) space is transformed into place (Gupta and Ferguson 1997c: 36). Appadurai's (1995) notion of locality production equally expresses this social dimension of placemaking. Next to the social, however, placemaking also has an intrinsic political dimension (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b: 6), which is defined by the aspect of resource appropriation that the appropriation of space comprises. Placemaking can therefore be regarded as a power struggle (Turton 2011) and is thus always a matter of integration and conflict. These aspects are of particular relevance with regard to the contemporary tendencies of sedentarization and territorialization, but no less in the context of urban migration. Placemaking opposes groups and involves a construction of difference and identity (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b: 13). It is thus intrinsically intertwined with ‘people making’ (ibid.: 4), i.e. ethnicity, processes of identification and the construction of social group boundaries.

Mobile and Multi-sited Fieldwork

An approach of studying not only the relations that Woɗaaɓe establish with their neighbours in a multitude of different environments, but also the translocal connections that they maintain across the different, seemingly disparate spheres in which they live today makes research inevitably multi-sited and mobile.

In a globalizing world, characterized by increasing flows of goods, ideas, technologies and people, static approaches to the anthropological field have increasingly been questioned and theorists have proposed to focus on shifting locations rather than bounded fields (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a: 38). The insight that the objects of research were increasingly mobile and could no longer be confined to specific locales (Sökefeld 2000: 51), fuelled the career of the methodological paradigm of multi-sited fieldwork for the study of mobile and multiply situated groups (Marcus 1986, 1995). This approach owed a lot to the field of migration studies, in which multi-sited fieldwork was already an established practice when the concept gained wider recognition in anthropology (Hannerz 2003: 202). The multi-site approach emphasizes the translocal linkages, and the interconnections between field sites (ibid.: 206). As these links are materialized in relations between people, it is crucial to analyse the social practices across sites on which they rely.

Arguably, research on mobile groups inevitably has to be mobile, yet whether this mobility makes it automatically multi-sited, is a different question. One might argue that the ‘field’ itself can be mobile and move through space with the people studied (Boesen 2010: 31f.). In the case of the pastoral Woɗaaɓe, however, the composition of residential units varies a lot over the year cycle and over time, due to the pastoral mode of production which demands a relative fragmentation into small units during a significant part of the year. Social groups split and regroup in shifting agglomerations yet remain closely connected. In this context of translocality, the multi-site aspect becomes obvious.

Urban migration adds a further dimension to the dispersal of social groups. Even a rough micro census of pastoral residence units reveals that many members of nuclear families are absent for a greater part of the year and might only come on and off for short visits. People switch between the pastoral and the urban realm, and they move within both. The situation is characterized by constant and multiple rural–urban, rural–rural and urban–urban flows of people. The potential ‘fields’ are thus dynamic and not bounded. My research was in this sense inevitably multi-sited, not only because I focused on a variety of different actors who were located in different sites, but also because many of these actors were highly mobile across sites, in their daily lives and in the pursuit of their economic and social activities. The study context cannot be understood by analysing the pastoral and the urban realm as separate field sites, but only by focussing on the connections that exist between the two spheres. The 'field', in this translocal perspective, is less defined by physical places than by social relations that are reproduced and that manifest themselves in variable forms over time and space. The translocal field of my research was thus defined by relational spaces, or, 'spaces of social relating' (de Bruijn and Brinkman 2012: 47), spanning different locations and spheres.

In such a situation of multiply connected and shifting potential 'fields', the problem of delimitation, the question of which sites to include into the scope of the work and which others not, was not without difficulty. I approached the problem by putting an initial focus both on specific sites and, within or across them, on a number of interlocutors, while being open to widening or changing the scope as my research progressed. For instance, I had first been most closely in contact with the Gojanko'en community in the Koutous region, but, given that their migration had taken place only recently and mutual visits to and from the Damergou region occurred frequently, it was evident that it would be important to include the latter region into the scope of the study and to explore the prevailing connections. It was equally significant to follow the links that both pastoral communities entertained with their urban-based members who stayed as migrant workers in Zinder, and who play a crucial role in keeping their spatially separated home communities connected. My research was thus characterized by an emergent object of study whose contours, sites and relationships materialized only gradually (Marcus 1995: 102). Faced with a multitude of interconnected sites, however, it was even more important to delimit at least a number of localities on which to focus the analysis. I decided to put an emphasis on one urban (Zinder) and two rural sites (Ganatcha in the Koutous region; Salaga in the Damergou region), while remaining open to following links to other, connected sites and using these data for comparison and to enrich the analysis.

For research in a community as tightly connected by mobility as it is dispersed in space, the method of 'following the people' (Marcus 1995: 106) seemed particularly well adapted. Building up on, and going beyond it, my own approach was often not so much to follow the people but to travel directly with them, i.e. to conduct research while accompanying them during their mobility (Sheller and Urry 2006: 217f.). This method proved to be especially fruitful in the cases of urban migrants visiting their families in the pastoral context. On such occasions, news are generally exchanged, recent developments discussed and relevant information passed on, which offered welcome opportunities to collect data and gain insights *en passant*. Mobility thus became a central principle of my own research.

Collective Social History Revealed through Autobiographical Narratives

While literature on pastoral mobility has often put a considerable focus on the agency of pastoralists, emphasizing the option of choice and the constant need for decisionmaking (e.g. Gulliver 1975: 371), in the contemporary condition, in which nomads and other indigenous minority groups are faced with radical and sometimes existential change, forced to adapt and find economic alternatives, they are often depicted one-sidedly as victims in a global power play (Gupta and Ferguson 1997c: 44; for the Woɗaaɓe, see Loftsdóttir 2000). However, it is not simply the conditions that bring about change in a society, but ultimately the people, who react to changing conditions, challenges and opportunities with conscious action that can also challenge or subvert existing orders (Gupta and Ferguson 1997c: 47). Although my interlocutors also sometimes depicted themselves as victims – as a minority-group excluded from political participation and processes of resource distribution – I perceived them just as much as rational agents, thinking, planning and deciding deliberately and strategically. My aim was therefore to put a focus on agency and to document strategies (as well as their limits, and their failures) to integrate into the wider society and state structures in order to participate at processes of resource distribution, but also the opposite tendency of the reproduction of difference and withdrawal from the state in order to subvert imposed structures.

I followed this aim by focussing on a number of key interlocutors, whose cases and life stories allowed, in complementary perspective, to grasp variations of a theme, and thus to arrive at a comprehensive view of the contemporary condition of this group. My principle of 'following the life or biography of interlocutors' (Marcus 1995: 109) added a historical dimension to the continuum of connected field-sites: as the accounts that I collected opened up a view on the itineraries of the past, I took up this thread, mapping not only contemporary movements between physical places, but also historical ones, thus tracing a spatio-historical continuum of mobility. My approach thus merges a diachronic perspective with an analysis of the contemporary condition.

Principally based on extensive participant observation, my research methods involved mainly semi-structured and open interviews encouraging thematically-focussed autobiographical narration. Near the end of the twentieth century, biographical approaches increasingly made their way into the social sciences and it has since been widely recognized that biographical material can show how social group processes translate on an individual level and how abstract historical processes of cultural change actually take place (Bertaux and Delcroix 2000: 73; Fischer-Rosenthal 2000). Bonfiglioli's (1988) *Dudal* is a good example of how oral accounts can shed light on individual agency in the context of wider historical processes.

In order to make visible the variety of socioeconomic transformations that can be found in the study group, I recorded a number of autobiographical accounts that reveal how recent change is experienced and coped with by the people, what strategies they pursue, what answers they give to the new questions and challenges, and what obstacles they face. Instead of recording complete life histories of a great number of individuals – an approach that, if taken seriously, would demand an extremely high degree of depth and complexity with questionable usefulness for the envisaged results – I favoured a focus on chapters or 'portions' of life histories (Vansina 1980: 266), i.e. biographically based yet thematically-focussed accounts of specific events.

The members of the study group are all linked by ties of kinship. The kinship group offers a system of interconnected actors, embedded in nets of reciprocal commitments, sharing common goals, strategies and values or being in conflict over them (Bertaux and Delcroix 2000: 73f.). In juxtaposition, the cases complement each other, as an example might illustrate: The life stories of the brothers Nano, Taafa and Maalam Buuyo (Chapter 9), if regarded in isolation, seem to present almost antithetic schemes: while the youngest brother has never turned away from pastoralism, the other two have spent a considerable part of their lives as migrant workers in different urban centres. What might seem disparate at first reveals itself to be two aspects of a joint project in which different roles are attributed to the different actors. The brothers follow a common strategy in which two of them seize urban job opportunities to subsidize the pastoral family economy, while the herds are managed by the third. The principal interest in the migrations of the first two is rooted in the local concerns which all three of them share.

Unfortunately, the format of the monograph limits the possibilities of including ethnographic data of any greater length. Although I quote from the autobiographic narratives or summarize parts of them as case examples throughout the book to substantiate generalizations, it was not possible here to give the voices of those studied the room they would have deserved. To compensate for this limitation and to give the interested reader a possibility to look into the primary sources on which the findings of this book are based, selected accounts have been made available in full length in a separate publication. This publication is available online with open access (Köhler 2017a, http://www.eth.mpg.de/pubs/series_fieldnotes/vol0020.html). References to texts featured in this volume are made by indication of the numbers of the respective text and paragraph(s).[3]

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into five parts, each carrying a Fulfulde title that summarizes the main aspect that is investigated. The first part is titled *Taariihi*, a term derived from the Arabic *tarikh* (تاريخ), meaning history, story or chronicle. The two chapters of this part deal with the history of the study group and of the Woɗaaɓe more generally, analysing how migration processes are connected to processes of group formation. Placemaking processes are examined here in historical perspective. First, in Chapter 1, by analysing how the structure of Woɗaaɓe society has historically developed in processes of fission and fusion, of disjunction and re-aggregation of social groups in a context of migration and mobility, and then, in Chapter 2, by reconstructing such processes using the concrete example of the historical itinerary of mobility of the study group. In a complementary view, these two chapters show how social groups are constructed and reconstructed in a continuous process, based on the principles of mobility and placemaking.

The second part, *Duuniyaaru,* examines inter-group relations and the question of the study group's integration in the wider poly-ethnic society of the study region. *Duuniyaaru* is another Arabic loanword, derived from the term *dunia* (دُنيا), meaning the world. In Fulfulde, the term can designate either the world at large, the world out there, or 'the people', other people. The Woɗaaɓe are part of a wider social, economic and political landscape, which they share with other ethnic groups and which I refer to as a meta-ethnic social space. Just as between individuals within a group, social space is produced by interaction between and across groups. Social space on a meta-ethnic systemic level (Schlee 2001b: 19) is thus the product of social interaction and exchange between the different groups that constitute the study region's poly-ethnic society. Chapter 3 examines how this meta-ethnic social space has been constituted historically by long co-existence and by the development of particular social institutions that favour exchange and communication between groups and thus have an integrating function. Chapter 4 looks more concretely at the mechanisms along which the integration of the different heterogeneous groups in a meta-ethnic social space works. Although the ethnic groups in the study region distinguish each other along clear boundaries, there are also levels of shared identification along different dimensions of identity (e.g. language, socio-economic profile, religion). Identification can change situationally, expressing changing perceptions of sameness and difference that are re-interpreted and re-negotiated depending on the context of interaction.

The third part, *Ladde*, refers to the pastoral space, the 'bush', the open rangeland. In chapter 5, I analyse more closely the recent transformations in spatial strategies and in relations to space and place, and I analyse the reasons for these changes. In chapter 6, their effects on the social, political and environmental level are assessed.

Part IV focusses on the urban space. The Fulfulde term *siʾire* can refer to a town or city, but also to a small village. Generally considered to be the sphere of the non Fulɓe others, the *Haaɓe*, it is the space that is opposed to *ladde*, the sphere of pastoralism and of the Woɗaaɓe. Nevertheless, as I argue in chapter 7, for many Woɗaaɓe the city has developed into an important complementary sphere of social and economic activities, since urban work migration was first taken up as a coping strategy during the major drought of the 1980s. Chapter 8 deals with social interaction in the city and describes how, similar to the rural poly-ethnic setting described in Chapter 4, the urban realm also allows for multiple possibilities of identification along different dimensions and categories for the formation of more or less inclusive urban communities. Chapter 9 argues that translocal social relations are crucial for identity construction among urban migrants. This point again relates to concepts of social space as manifested in the networks of relationships that an individual or a social group maintains (Ingold 2007, 2009; Massey 1994, 2005): The spaces that connect the urban and the pastoral spheres between which many Woɗaaɓe today move are socially constructed by networks of people who are translocally linked.

Part V, *Gassungol Woɗaaɓe*, puts the focus on questions of the translocal reproduction of the ethnic group and on the challenges for cultural continuity that evolve from the contemporary situation of urban migration. *Gassungol Woɗaaɓe* is used as a metaphoric designation for the ethnic group. *Gassungol* is a special kind of rope that is used to tie up the household loads on a pack animal when camp is moved. The ethnic group is thus conceived as an ensemble of clans that are tied together by the translocal politico-ceremonial alliances of *ngaanka* like a net, or a network. In this last part, I examine more closely how this network of translocal relations is established and maintained.

Intra-ethnic processes of differentiation (between different clans) are at least as relevant for identity construction among the Woɗaaɓe as differentiation from external others (Boesen 2004b: 120; 2008a). While Chapter 4 has put a focus on processes of identification and differentiation along interface situations with other ethnic groups, in Chapter 10, the analysis is moved to internal processes of identification, i.e. to interface situations between clans and their role for social group formation and reproduction.

This last part rounds out the argument of translocality as a fundamental principle of social group formation and community production in Woɗaaɓe society. In chapter 10, I argue that the continuity of the ethnic group relies on the maintenance of a network of ceremonial and marital inter-clan alliances across an extended social space; in chapter 11, I show how, in the contemporary condition, the exposure, particularly of urban migrants, to alternative value systems represents a challenge to the translocal reproduction of the ethnic group.

Notes

1. Bovin (1998: 94), while also referring to Paris, gives a figure of around 125,000.
2. E.g. north western Namibia (Greiner 2010).
3. References to other interviews or field diary entries are made by indication of the name of the interlocutor and the date.