

From the Editors' Desk

Africa Spectrum has undergone some important changes with the introduction of its “all-English” and “Open Access” policies in 2009. Those changes involved numerous, purely technical adjustments and amendments to the review process – all costing the time and energy of everyone involved: editors, section editors, reviewers, editorial assistants and copyeditors. We want to use this opportunity to thank all those who frequently went beyond what could reasonably be expected. Reactions from our readers and close observers suggest that results of the reforms initiated and implemented have been largely positively received. The steep rise in download figures over the last four years (see <www.africa-spectrum.org/statistics>) is just one comforting indication that the journal is reaching out, meeting interests and extending its readership.

For a number of years, the periodical's issues were produced with a slight delay in publication. No. 3/2011 was delivered in early February 2012. The aforementioned time-consuming reform process prevented us for quite some time from closing the gap. We are now sailing into calmer waters, which seems to signal successful consolidation. As a result, the current double issue (2–3/2012) moves us to where we want to be as a journal: both on time and timely.

This double issue contains a number of articles that address some of the most pertinent current themes on the continent in terms of regional conflict and transition. After the tumultuous early 1990s, which witnessed movements for democratisation on a continental level, political developments became to a large extent predictable for the majority of countries: Those that took a turn toward democratisation faced different challenges than those where incumbent regimes managed to resist change, at least initially. Only since 2010 – partly related to the “Arabellion” in North Africa inspiring renewed calls for democracy, and partly as a result of new military interventions (the UN-backed operations in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire, to a lesser extent the deployment of US special forces to combat the Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa, plus the Kenyan military intervention in Somalia) – has a new dynamic with unforeseeable consequences set in. Violent forms of contestation, never absent from the continent, but receiving scant attention, have become not only more visible, but also more widespread. Religious and social movements have also regained importance, as if

it has taken an entire generation for the cycle of engagement and disappointment to come full circle.¹

This issue contains both analyses/reports and research articles, covering the breakdown of order in Mali (Hagberg/Körling), the public debate surrounding the army coup in that same country (Whitehouse), the *KONY 2012* campaign in and around Uganda (Finnström), and Nigeria's Boko Haram from a Religious Studies point of view (Loimeier). The shock of the massacre at the Marikana mine in South Africa is the obvious reference point for the contribution by Vishwas Satgar, who relates the event to the general socio-economic orientation of Africa's most important economy.

The challenges that environmental threats are posing for grass-roots organisations and other civil society agencies in Nigeria is another relevant, pressing issue that has not yet broken into the core concerns of most local initiatives beyond strategic thinking (Iwilade). Original and instructive on rarely presented topics are also the contributions on cross-border trade and the "militarized peace" between South Sudan and Uganda (Schomerus/Titeca) and the state of Polish African Studies (Czernichowski et al.). A conference report and three book reviews complement the wide range of articles in this volume.

Finally, we conclude our debate on land rights issues (starting in 2011) with a contribution on land relations and globalised citizenship (Pernes) – but not without seeking to initiate a new discussion on another thought-provoking topic! In his contribution to this double issue, Francis Nyamnjoh, a long-standing member of our advisory board, shares personal reflections on the postcolonial turn in, and the future of, anthropology in Africa. We hereby invite scholars to submit short contributions (not to exceed 2,000 words) on aspects of anthropology in Africa to what promises to be a challenging and inspiring debate.

■ The editors

1 Following the influential idea promoted by Albert O. Hirschman: *Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982.