The Intersection of East Asian and African Modernities: Towards a New Research Agenda

Social Imaginaries 3.1 (2017) 119-146

The Intersection of East-Asian and African Modernities: Towards a New Research Agenda

Elsje Fourie

Abstract: This article identifies strands of literature across several disciplines that seek to explore the ideational impact of the proliferating linkages between East Asian and African societies. It argues that these debates could more fruitfully engage with one another if their common concern is understood to be the intersection of modernities—broadly defined as societal self-understandings that wish to provide answers to collective economic, political and epistemic problems. These discussions are well-placed to further explore these intersections by understanding how processes of policy transfer and policy assemblages link various East Asian and African modernities, while reflexive and transnational methodologies such as multi-sited ethnographies may provide innovative methodological tools. A case study of recent attempts to construct Chinese-inspired industrial parks across Ethiopia provides an example of intersecting modernities in practice.

Key words: modernity — East Asia — Africa — policy transfer — policy assemblages — societal self-understandings — Ethiopia — China — industrial parks

The proliferating relationships between African societies and their new Asian investors, donors and trading partners have over the past decade been matched by a concomitant surge of scholarship on their implications for development. In this regard, Copious accounts focusing on direct economic repercussions for the African continent have been accompanied by discussions on the role that these relationships play in reshaping the international development landscape and in possibly displacing the role of 'traditional' donors in Africa.

Alongside such materialist and globalist debates, a third group of analyses has begun to explore the influence that growing African-Asian ties are exercising in less tangible areas such as governance, state-building and economic planning in Africa. Here East Asian countries are seen to play a particularly pertinent role, for reasons that will become clear shortly. It is this final group

of discussions on which I wish to focus in this article, which argues that such analyses have constituted admirable attempts to grapple with the ideational impact of Asia's (re)entry into Africa, but that they fail to explicitly identify the key unifying theme behind such developments. This theme, I argue, is the intersection of modernities, defined by Wagner (2012) as collective and reflexive answers to some of the key *problématiques* that occupy societies in their search for the good life. If debates around concepts such as the 'African developmental state', 'South-South learning' and the 'Singapore model' are all understood as having at their core a common concern with the interactions produced when East Asian and African societies look to each other for an understanding of their own modernities, a promising research agenda emerges. Such a research agenda could focus on certain key theories (such as lesson-drawing and policy emulation) and certain key methodologies (such as multi-sited transnational ethnography). Most importantly, it could engage with questions around the feasibility, desirability and meaning of modernity in societies in which visions of the modern are again being fervently debated among political elites and populations alike.

The argument presented in this article proceeds in four parts. I begin by drawing together several strands of literature that each, in one way or another, empirically explores the increasing intersection of East Asian and African modes of social, political and economic organization. In the second section, I argue that such writings are fruitfully viewed as sharing a common concern with how modernities intersect, and make the case for a definition of this concept that encompasses, but is not limited to, those processes of social change typically associated with modernization. The penultimate section explores theoretical frameworks and methodologies that can serve to further crystallise these concerns into a common research agenda; it is argued that an emphasis on policy transfer, emulation and mobilities would be particularly helpful in explaining how reflexive actors in disparate societies draw on 'foreign' lessons in understanding 'domestic' development practices and trajectories. The article concludes with a brief case study in which it is argued that Ethiopian policymakers' drive to transform the country into 'the leading manufacturing hub in Africa' (EIC 2016) by building eight new industrial parks in less than a decade, represents an intersection of Chinese and Ethiopian modernities, in which both Chinese and Ethiopian actors are challenged to confront and reconceptualise their answers to the central concerns of modern life.

A Slowly Coalescing Body of Literature

Recent years have witnessed a marked increase in Africa-Asia relations, to the extent that many African and Asian societies are now bound together by a far denser web of institutional and interpersonal ties than was the case a mere decade ago. Largely an outgrowth of rapid industrialization and economic

growth in a range of so-called 'emerging economies' from the latter region, these trends have resulted in: an increase of investment by Asian individuals and companies in Africa, the proliferation of Africa-Asia trade flows, increased migration between the two continents and the evolution of political cooperation between these regions' political elites. A large body of literature has focused on the repercussions of such trends on Asian economic ambitions and particularly, on African socio-economic development. Questions often focus on the extent to which Africa's emerging relations with 'Asian Drivers' such as Malaysia, India, South Korea and China, are reproducing prior colonial patterns of capitalist exploitation and domination between Africa and the West (see for example: Taylor 2014; Frynas and Paulo 2007; Brautigam 2015). Other analyses have departed from what might be termed materialist explanations in order to focus on the impact of growing African-Asian relations on global governance and Western historical dominance in Africa, particularly in the sphere of development assistance (See for example: Woods 2008; Kurlantzick 2007).

Alongside these two broad groupings, a smaller set of writings has sought to arrive at understandings that have both a constructivist orientation and a concern for the direct impact of evolving Africa-Asia ties on the two continents in question. Such reflections often seek, in one way or another, to explore less immediately tangible ways in which Asian actors' recent (re)-entries into Africa are altering or reinforcing African developmental configurations and trajectories.[1] As shall be explored in this overview of the East Asia has rapidly been transformed from a site of fervent development debates on industrialization, state developmentalism and societal transformation in the 1980s and 1990s, to a collection of powerful agents of development in their own right. This has led authors to focus particularly on countries in this sub-region, and to see certain patterns in the ways that East Asian societies interact with those in Africa.[2] How then, ask scholars, is the increasing presence of East Asian investors, politicians, experts and workers in the streets, boardrooms and universities of African countries helping to shape the expression of key constructs such as the state and capitalism in the African context? Are these increased flows of information, people and goods altering the ways that Africans think about their own place in the world and in history? Some analyses have even begun to turn these questions on their heads and to explore the extent to which increased levels of contact with Africa have altered the perceptions that agents within the 'East Asian drivers' have of their own development trajectories (see, for example, Shen 2009).

One debate that seeks to provide answers to this theme concerns itself with the existence and desirability of a *Chinese model of development* for Africa. Although the transferability of China's domestic development trajectory has been examined in reference to developing countries around the globe, it is Africa that has been a key locus of the debate. The substantial number of

analyses seeking to examine the merits of applying a putative 'China Model' (Zhao 2010; Sautman and Hairong 2007; Breslin 2011) or 'Beijing Consensus' (Ramo 2004; Halper 2010) to other developing countries—and particularly to the African context—have been joined by an even larger body of works exploring the discrete lessons that Africa may wish to adapt from China's successes. To name just one example, Martin Ravallion (2008) has argued that those African countries seeking to emulate Chinese industrialization and economic growth would do well to take the country's prior experiences of agricultural reform and rural development into account.[3]

There remains little agreement on whether China offers a distinctive, coherent and transferable set of lessons of which African leaders may take advantage when formulating development policy. Chinese academics have on the whole been distinctly agnostic in this regard (Kennedy 2010), even as China's state media has seized on every expression of interest in China's model to emanate from African policy elites (see for example China Daily 2007). And while there have certainly been many such public expressions of interest, it has not always been clear to what extent African leaders and publics urging emulation of China have shared a common vision, let alone been able to translate these into development outcomes.

While Breslin (2011, p. 1324) may therefore be correct in terming the China model a 'speech act' rather than a novel template of development, this does not render the term useless. Rather, 'talking of it, and defining it in a specific way, makes it real and gives it real power' (Breslin 2011, p. 1324). There is evidence to suggest that external demand for Chinese 'lessons' has prompted Chinese academics to more deeply consider the content and universality of their country's own vision of the good life, or at the very least, to express these to an outside audience. Similarly, the Chinese government has overcome its initial caution at being perceived as prescriptive and arrogant abroad, in favour of a recognition that African emulation of China brings symbolic and 'soft power' benefits, spurring a raft of lesson-sharing initiatives and study visits between Chinese and African policy elites.

China's post-reform economic growth and industrialization have also prompted intensive introspection in many African societies. This introspection has touched on foundational questions of statehood, political governance, responses to global capitalism and the sources of societal knowledge. In Ethiopia, for example, this has prompted the ruling party to place a high premium on *inter alia,* the development of large modernist infrastructure projects such as the Gilgel Gibe III dam and the establishment of dozens of institutions specializing in technical and vocational training (TVET) (Fourie 2015). In short, it has prompted a rethinking of modernity in several African societies, even as the debate has prompted China to reconsider its own modernity.

More speculatively, but in a very similar vein, authors have wondered whether other East Asian countries might be offering policy lessons,

institutional templates or merely loose inspiration to countries in the Global South, and particularly in Africa. The so-called 'Singapore Model' has received some attention due in large part to pronouncements from leaders such as Rwanda's Paul Kagame (cited in Pow 2014; also Kagame 2014). There is also strong evidence to suggest that Kenya's Vision 2030 development strategy has specifically drawn on the Singaporean and Malaysian experiences of rapid modernization for inspiration (Fourie 2014), and South Korea remains a much-discussed source of potential lessons (Igbafen 2014).

In many ways, of course, this turn in the literature is by no means new. The 1980s and 1990s saw a wave of discussion around the 'East Asian Model', and on the 'developmental state' as its central feature. This model, said to be epitomized by South Korea, Taiwan and Japan but present to lesser degrees also in other high-growth states in the region, is dependent on the firm but business-friendly guiding hand of an elite bureaucracy of economic policymakers insulated from societal and political pressures and legitimized by rapid increases in material wellbeing for large parts of the population.[4] However this body of literature witnessed a decline in its fortunes after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, with critics attributing East Asia's failures to 'crony capitalism' and an insufficient separation between the state and the private sector (see for example Kang 2002).

It is only with the (re-)entry of East Asia into Africa, the phenomenon of high growth in certain African states and the onset of financial crisis in the 'West' that the debate on the 'developmental state' has again come to a head. Taking as its starting point a prescient and much-cited article by Thandika Mkandawire (2001), this most recent incarnation is more highly focused on the model's applicability to Africa than was the case in earlier decades. The literature on the *African developmental state* is preoccupied with questions about whether African states can translate their recent economic growth into structural transformation and whether they will be able to construct and safeguard technocratic bureaucracies resistant to both global neoliberal pressures and domestic patrimonial legacies. It also asks whether all of this is possible under a broadly democratic system of governance.[5]

An important offshoot of these debates is the concept of *developmental (neo-) patrimonialism*, where neo-patrimonalism is defined as governance that combines some impersonal, formal elements with 'significant levels of informality and high levels of rent- seeking, clientelism and corruption' (Kelsall 2013, p. 15). If such leaders are able to at least partly centralize the management of economic rents and orient these towards the long-term rather than solely towards short-term survival of the regime, theorists argue, such neo-patrimonialism may nonetheless be developmental in nature. For this to occur, however, African countries need 'strong, visionary leaders, constrained democracy, top-down patron-client relations and confident and competent economic technocracies' (Kelsall 2013, p. 17). East Asia emerges as a point of

reference throughout the analysis, both for scholars and for leaders in the African cases—Tanzania, Ghana, Ethiopia and Rwanda—under consideration. And the specific exemplars mentioned here are not always the 'classic' developmental states, but rather those states in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia and Indonesia, where broad increases in material wellbeing were accompanied by rather less stringent standards of governance than was the case in Japan, South Korea and the like.

One group of writings that considers the ideational influence of East Asia on Africa in a far more critical fashion revolves around African cities and their use of imageries, modes of governance and blueprints that are inspired by the high modernism of certain East Asian urban spaces. Watson (2014), for instance, detects the influence of 'iconic eastern cities' such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur and Dubai on 'urban fantasies' across Africa.[6] Across the continent, plans for dozens of satellite cities such as Konza Techno City near Nairobi and Eko Atlantic near Lagos are being drawn up by what she terms transnational 'growth coalitions…trading in technical knowledge and global best practice' (Watson 2014, p. 225). These often staggeringly ambitious plans at times even involve revamping entire capital cities, as has been the case with plans for a modernist Kigali that explicitly seek to position it as 'Africa's Singapore' (Pow 2014, p. 295; Meagher 2013, p. 396-397). Scholars have been highly critical of what they perceive to be a technocratic and non-consultative process that reorders cities around the interests of international property investors, emerging middle classes and political elites, and that marginalizes the urban poor (Watson 2014; Linehan 2007; Pow 2014; Meagher 2013).

Finally, a discussion that has thus far remained rooted in the policy discourse is worth mentioning here for its potential both to enrich and to be enriched by academic analysis. A rapidly-growing number of institutional actors are engaging in the facilitation, implementation and evaluation of a process they term as either *South-South Learning* (Wu et al 2010), *Knowledge Exchange for Capacity Development* (WBI and KDI 2011), or *South-South Capacity Development* (Tejasvi 2007). Such terms encompass all activities that promote the exchange of good practice between countries broadly constructed as belonging to the Global South, particularly in policy domains in which technical expertise is seen to play an important role. Study visits by policymakers are a particularly common instrument. The International Poverty Reduction Centre in China (IPRCC), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Korea Development Institute (KDI) have all played an instrumental role in driving this process, while the World Bank has recently attempted to position itself as its global facilitator. A handful of policy documents has attempted to (often rather superficially) evaluate the successes of *South-South learning* (WBI, KDI 2011; Wu et al 2010; Tejasvi 2007), but these discussions are ripe for discursive and critical analysis that seeks to understand how this

'learning' process alters or illuminates the self-understandings of those societies participating in it.

The discussions detailed above approach their objects of analysis from a wide range of worldviews, and this often discourages them directly engaging with one another. Yet despite these debates' differing ontological and epistemological assumptions, they are united by a common interest in understanding the ideational impacts of East Asia's ever-denser network of ties with Africa. Each, in its own way, seeks to discover how two regions with differing historical experiences of economic and political development react when these histories begin to merge. Each is constructivist, in the sense of being concerned with the cognitive, discursive or social processes of 'world-making' through which societal actors construct their visions of the collective good. These strands of the literature are by no means the only discussions to do so, as the above list does not aim to be exhaustive but rather to illustrate what it might look like when historically divergent modernities intersect, confront or enrich each other. The following section justifies my choice of the term *modernity* to describe this process, and explains how the term can add to our understanding of these intertwining development trajectories.

The Rationale for a Focus on Intersecting Modernities

Writings that seek to understand the intangible but localized developmental impacts of the growing interconnectedness of Africa and East Asia are in some ways highly eclectic. They can be found within the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, political science, international relations and political economy. Although few authors have explicitly framed their research on East Asia's increased engagement with Africa in terms of intersecting modernities, this article argues that such a perspective would indeed offer an interesting and cohesive vantage point from which to view many recent academic discussions. What I wish therefore to argue here, is that many (and perhaps even most) of these approaches, diverse as they may be, have at their heart a common but unarticulated concern. It is a concern with African and East Asian modernities, and particularly with the tensions, frictions and amalgams that result when these intersect. By more consciously looking at these dynamics through the lens of modernity, dialogues currently running in parallel can come together into a coherent and pragmatic research agenda. In drawing on a common pool of methodologies, concepts and theoretical concerns, such an agenda can prove helpful in improving our understanding of a set of processes all too often overshadowed by structuralist analyses of Asia's growing presence in Africa.

Any research agenda claiming to have at its core a focus on modernity must of course clearly define and operationalize this concept. Such a definition faces a dual challenge: on the one hand, it must avoid conflating modernity with

modernization, or at least with any view of the latter term as a structurally-determined and uniform process. As numerous critics of modernization theory and its more recent manifestations have pointed out (Wagner 2012; Eisenstadt 2000, Comaroff and Comaroff 2012), the conflation of modernity with any particular set of institutions, values or societal processes risks presenting the European experience as definitive and other modernities as mere (and often imperfect) copies. At the same time, modernity must be defined in a way that allows phenomena to fall outside its scope (Fourie 2012) and that enables comparative analysis (Wagner 2012). The concept of 'multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt 2000) has constituted a welcome attempt to introduce agency and reflexivity into discussions on contemporary modernity and thereby to rectify the structural determinism and teleological assumptions present in much of traditional modernization theory. To speak only of 'multiple modernities', however, is to emphasise difference at the expense of cross-societal commonality. Furthermore, the theory's frequent use of 'civilization' as a primary unit of analysis—proponents typically use terms such as 'Confucian modernity', 'Islamic modernity' and 'European modernity'—has also excluded many postcolonial societies such as South Africa and Malaysia from this important debate (Wagner 2012).

The social theorist most keenly preoccupied with navigating these opposing hazards has been Peter Wagner, and it is his broad but structured definition of modernity around which this article proposes to construct the envisioned research programme. According to Wagner (2008, 2012), modernity is centred around three basic questions or *problématiques:* these pertain to the source of societal knowledge (the epistemic *problématique*), the formulation of rules governing the relationship between individual and collective autonomy (the political *problématique*) and the satisfaction of human material needs (the economic *problématique*). Furthermore, 'to say that a society embraces a modern self-understanding…implies that all these questions are truly open; that answers to them are not externally given but need to be found; and that, therefore, contestation of the validity of existing answers is always possible' (Wagner 2012, p. 74).

It may appear that modernity conceived of in such relatively abstract terms says little about the specific ways in which societal modes of organization have been transformed in the modern era—if indeed they have been at all. At the heart of such a definition, however, is the possibility of different manifestations of what Wagner (2012) terms 'societal self- understandings', which are underpinned by the answers that societies give to these *problématiques* and in turn form the foundation of their modernities. While these self- understandings may vary widely from one another, they are only possible in a post- Enlightenment world marked indelibly with early modernization's promises of progress, human mastery and societal reflexivity. These self-understandings may indeed, in many cases, turn out to revolve around classic modernist

themes such as industrialization, electoral democracy, capital accumulation, secular rationality and the bureaucratic state. As the literature review and case study illustrate, the intersection of East Asian and African modernities often does centre on many institutions and processes that would have been intimately familiar to the modernization theorists of the 1950s and 1960s. It is important, however, that these self-understandings do not do so *by definition*. And even if, for example, East Asian engagement in Africa may strengthen ambitions for the structural transformation of the economy in the latter region, the envisioned (and resulting) structural transformation may depart radically from its European roots.

Future contributors to the envisioned research agenda may wish to reconceptualise or narrow the 'core' of modernity as the programme evolves. Nevertheless, at present a definition that situates the genesis of modernity within colonial Europe, whilst simultaneously acknowledging the vast differences in the ways that collective human agents may now interpret this phenomenon and their relationship to it, is potentially most fruitful.

The concept of intersecting modernities outlined above resembles to a certain extent the important work that theorists have already done in challenging the implicit assumption that modernities are formed more or less independently of one another. For Randeria (2006), the utility of plural modernities lies not only in the notion that modernities can diverge from the Western model, but more importantly helps us to explore the myriad, uneven and messy ways in which modernity has entangled and interwoven groups of people across the globe. She argues, therefore, for a 'relational perspective which foregrounds processes of interaction and intermixture in the entangled histories of uneven modernities' (Randeria 2006, p. 216). As example, she traces the construction of ethnicity in India, as we know it today, to colonial modes of administration; conversely, the West's rediscovery of communitarianism and multiculturalism hundreds of years later owed much to modes of governance it had previously imposed on others but eschewed for itself (Randeria 2006).

Similarly, Gaonkar's (2001) influential edited volume elaborating on Appadurai's (1996) concept of 'alternative modernities' contains a number of studies that explore the transnational diffusion and construction of modernist imaginaries, once again particularly during the colonial era. As does this article, Gaonkar (2001, p. 14) conceives of modernity as a mode of expression and questioning that first emerged in the West but is now 'global and multiple and no longer has a governing center and master narratives to accompany it'. Furthermore, his concept of 'creative adaptation'—a process by which 'a people 'make' themselves modern' (Gaonkar 2001, p. 16) through continuously re-examining the present and determining what form those institutions and cultural expressions associated with early modernity will manifest in their

own locales—has much in common with Wagner's own concept of societal self-understanding.

The point here is not to present the concepts of societal self-understandings and intersecting modernities as radically new or completely different from predecessors such as those outlined above. Indeed, they owe a heavy debt to the authors highlighted above, particularly to Gaonkar. It is primarily in the application of these concepts to contemporary debates on burgeoning East Asian-African relations through which this article seeks to make a contribution. Nevertheless, subtle differences in emphasis exist between the approaches—differences that I believe make mine more suited to this task. Both Gaonkar and Randeria ultimately retain the West as a benchmark towards which their own concepts stand in opposition. Alternative modernities are still usually positioned as alternatives to European modernity (Ashcroft 2009), and while Randeria's positioning *vis á vis* the West is more implicit, her theory aims primarily to explode the myth of a homogenous and hegemonic Western modernity smoothly transforming subaltern populations. But a focus on intersecting modernities seeks to do away entirely with the notion that the West is still home to institutions such as capitalism and rationalism, thereby reducing the West from the elephant lurking in the corner of the room to merely one of many elephants in plain sight.

In addition, Wagner's operationalization is, I believe, useful in helping us to define modernity and structure our empirical analysis. A focus on the economic, political and epistemic aspects of societal self-understandings gives us a much-needed foothold on the notoriously slippery concept of modernity. The purposive use of the society as a unit of analysis is particularly valuable here. Wagner (2012) aims to counteract the deconstruction of the collective that has become prevalent in contemporary social theory, whilst at the same time moving beyond the structural functionalism associated with earlier versions of collectivism. Thus societies (and their self-understandings) occupy an intermediate level between the lived experience of the individual and the overly abstract level of the 'civilization' or the state. The society is imaginary but nonetheless very real, as 'human beings have endowed themselves with the capacity to act collectively upon their ways of living together and…a purely juridico-political concept such as the state does not capture the manifold ways in which such action is possible' (Wagner 2012, p. 73).

The concept of intersecting modernities is therefore less site-based then that of Goankar; even where it uses ethnographic and anthropological methods, it seeks to understand broader societal implications. It is for this reason that we must also diverge from Randeria's theory which, while important in its own right, is inherently critical and deconstructing. Concepts such as 'uneven' and 'threatened' modernities are ultimately concerned with 'modernities from the margins…from the perspective of the excluded and the repressed' (Thomassen 2012, p. 165). The concept of intersecting modernities is not

only interested here in diversity and hybridity, but also in structure and cohesion that can serve not only as a tool of hegemony and uniformity but also as a tool of creative and communal (re)construction.

In short, under discussion here is the manner in which heightened interactions between East Asia and Africa shape the answers that societies on both continents give to the epistemic, political and economic *problématiques*. Societies do not by definition correspond to nations or states, but nevertheless refer to large groups of people who at least implicitly feel themselves mutually bound by the answers to these *problématiques* (contested as their content may be). In addition, given the importance of constructions such as the nation-state and the power that political elites are often able to exercise in shaping such constructions, the borders of societal self-understandings are often highly political.

This is not to imply that societies ever reach consensus or lasting agreement on the answers to these fundamental questions, or that economic, political and epistemic settlements do not reflect (or mask) vast power differentials. In fact, the conflict that the search for such societal self-understandings generates is often highly productive in generating new answers, as when Zambian trade unions protest against the conditions in Chinese-run mines and thereby contribute to broader demands for improved labour rights, or when African attempts to emulate South Korean agricultural development under military dictator Park Chung-Hee prompt soul-searching in South Korea itself. Ultimately, however, a focus on intersecting modernities implies a level of abstraction that in some way moves beyond the individual anthropological subject and her/his lived experience of the modern. Our concern, then, is with the dominant discourses, societal institutions, ideologies and policies that this intersection of modernities brings about.

New Theoretical and Methodological Directions

The above sections demonstrate the importance of understanding how the answers that different societies in East Asia and Africa have provided to Wagner's three *problématique*s are formulated not in isolation but rather through cross-pollination. In particular, East Asia has presented African societies with certain visions of modernity that have influenced the latter's own modes of political, economic and social organization. Yet despite the centrality of emulative dynamics in these processes, these have not often been thoroughly explored or theorized. The next section suggests certain theoretical concepts and frameworks that can be employed to understand these dynamics, as well as novel methodological tools that scholars interested in intersecting East Asian modernities might add to their repertoire.

One way of thinking about the movement of ideas and policy programmes such as 'Kaizen' (a Japanese productivity-boosting philosophy that is being

taught in factories in several African countries) or 'Big Fast Results' (a methodology of policy implementation devised by the Malaysian state and now employed by South Africa and Tanzania) is simply as diffusion. Yet the concept of diffusion has tended to focus on structural change at the macro or global level, brought about by the unidirectional spread of practices and policies from a single 'lead country' (Rose 1991, p. 1). Because convergence—rather than divergence—is the focus, theorists are more concerned with tracing patterns of policy adoption than with the agency of its recipients or with the reasons for adaptation (Bennett 1991, p. 221). In fact, diffusion does not even have to imply the conscious transfer of policies and practices, as historical, socio-economic and technological pressures may drive the adoption of a foreign model.

For these reasons, concepts that focus on human agency by treating the process as conscious and purposive are better suited to understanding how and when the proposed solutions to Wagner's *problématiques* travel from East Asia to Africa—and when they do not. In the political sciences, a substantial body of largely positivist literature has focused on the 'process by which knowledge of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present)' is used to develop similar features in another (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000, p. 5). Where the focus has been primarily on the 'pull' factors that motivate decision-makers in receiving countries, this process has often been termed 'lesson-drawing' (Rose 1991); where the process has been more broadly conceptualized to include coercive transfer (of the type that accompanied the World Bank's structural adjustment programmes, for example), the term 'policy transfer' has often been used (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000). Both specify a wide range of objects that can be transferred, actors who can participate in this process and degrees of transfer (from slavish imitation to much looser forms of inspiration).

Alongside political science approaches that have largely viewed the participants of policy transfer as optimizing rational actors, a parallel set of approaches within geography and cognate disciplines has emerged to explain the socially-constructed and power-laden dimensions of policy mobility (McCann and Ward 2012; McCann and Ward 2013). The notion of 'policy assemblage', in particular, views 'the sites from and to which policies are transferred…not as discrete territories' but rather as collections of ideas, instruments and institutions that have been assembled in ways that are always dynamic and often haphazard and path-dependent (McCann and Ward 2012, p. 327).

Finally, bridging the constructivist and positivist divide are concepts such as Westney's (1987) 'cross-societal emulation', which are broadly concerned with the ways in which 'social formations imitate (to varying degrees selectively) or reject cultural, social, political or other attributes from different areas of the world' (Robertson 2001, p. 467). These are primarily interested in embedding the actions of emulating elites within broader historical and

societal trajectories, and usually explicitly reject the notion that participants are 'rational shoppers' who dispassionately survey and select optimal policies from the outside (Westney 1987, p. 21-24).

The point here is not to argue a preference for one of these approaches over the others, but rather to demonstrate the myriad epistemological perspectives and theoretical tools available to those wishing to understand how East Asian and African modernities have influenced each other, and particularly how powerful actors have sought to transfer elements of these modernities between the two locales. All of the strands of the literature mentioned in *Section 2* describe or debate processes of emulation, lesson-drawing or policy assemblage, although few employ these concepts. Kelsall (2013, p. 6), to name just one example, advocates the importance of what Noman and Stiglitz have termed 'learning, industrial and technology (LIT)' policies for African states, yet the learning that is said to drive the requisite technological and industrial 'catch-up' is essentially policy transfer by another name.

The range of concepts and theories that scholars interested in the intersection between East Asian and African modernities have at their disposal militates for an equally wide range of methodologies. Nevertheless, certain research designs would seem to lend themselves particularly well to understanding how processes of emulation and policy transfer contribute to evolving and shifting societal self-understandings across East Asia and Africa. One such methodology is a multi-sited ethnography that would allow researchers to trace transnational flows of people and ideas (Marcus 1995).

What would such a methodology look like in practice for our nascent research agenda? A researcher might, in concrete terms, accompany and observe a high-level official study visit from Ethiopia to South Korea in order to understand the gaps and overlaps between delegates' prior expectations of agricultural development and 'reality' of the field site and associated 'lessons' being presented by their hosts; she may follow them back again in order to understand to what extent they translate new ideas gathered during the trip into policy and the forms of wider public resistance they encounter in this process. She may also be interested in exploring how the sharing of 'lessons' alters or conditions their South Korean hosts' understandings of their own country's development trajectory, and how site visits are constructed for external consumption. One study that has borrowed from this methodology is Tugendhat and Alemu's (2016) comprehensive and important survey of the aims and outcomes of Chinese agricultural trainings for African officials.

Such a methodology has several advantages. Multi-sited ethnography has been particularly influential in the field of transnational migration, where its ability to follow the multi-directional movements not only of migrants themselves but also of their translocal identities and societal engagements has made it influential in challenging prior dichotomies around the notion of belonging (Mazzucato 2008; Fitzgerald 2006). Similarly, observing the movements of

ideas about the modern—whether embodied in policies, social movements or institutions—can challenge the still-dominant notion that these modernities are primarily autochthonous. At the same time, it can also illustrate the influence of place and context on mobile ideas that otherwise risk being treated as free-floating and easily replicable. Marcus (1995) may have placed 'people', and especially migrants, first in his seminal typology of what can be followed, but bodies are also important vehicles of societal ideas. And as he points out, 'things' (such as commodities), metaphors, narratives, biographies or—most importantly for our purposes—conflicts ('notable contested issues in contemporary society') (Marcus 1995, p. 110), also travel between research sites.

The process of observing policies, practices and ideas about development both in their locations of origin and in the locations to which they travel can therefore lead to a more nuanced understanding of how modernities are built and rebuilt by local actors on both continents. As such, it has the potential to correct an imbalance in the current literature which tends towards a disproportionate focus on East Asia's influence on African societal self-understandings rather than the other way around.

Suitable methodologies need not necessarily be ethnographic nor multi-sited—there is also the need for macro- and meso-level analysis of societal and national cases, as we are, after all, ultimately concerned with how modernities are negotiated within a collectivity. Discourse analysis, too, can provide a rich illustration of the way in which societal actors make sense of the paradigm shifts and collective bargains that contact with unfamiliar imaginaries often entails. The subjects of such methodologies need not always be elites or policymakers—increasing tourism and media flows, for example, may spur mass publics in African and East Asia to reconsider their own modernities. This article would, however, urge researchers to adopt methodological orientations that are in some way reflective and interpretive. Even insights from political science and policy studies would benefit, it is argued, from an examination of the cognitive, normative and discursive processes that contribute to the intermingling of the answers that East Asian and African societies give to Wagner's *problé*matiques. Methodologies that treat societal actors as rational decision-makers who merely respond to economic incentives or represent their respective institutions would therefore risk treating the process of intersection in a mechanistic and pre-determined manner.

Ethiopia's Bid to Become the 'China of Africa'

At this point, a case study is helpful in illustrating how one particular East Asian societal self-understanding is increasingly intersecting with another halfway across the world. Attempts by the Ethiopian government to industrialise rapidly through export-oriented manufacturing and particularly through the country-wide creation of industrial parks have clear—and as we shall see,

purposive—parallels with transformations that occurred in China several decades earlier. For this reason, Ethiopia has been dubbed either the potential 'China of Africa' (Brautigam quoted in Hamlin, Gridneff and Davison 2014) or even 'China's China' (Hamlin, Gridneff and Davison 2014) due to its desire to provide cheap labour to Chinese manufacturers looking to escape rising domestic production costs. China's drastic reformulation of its political and economic solutions to the puzzle of modernity under Deng Xiaoping has had a powerful impact on Ethiopian imaginaries, spurring both emulation and unforeseen consequences. Similarly, China is still grappling with its role as 'teacher'—a role that is in turn shaping its own vision of its future and recent past.

Ethiopia's industrialization agenda is one of the most ambitious on the continent, if not the world. In 2014, the country established an Industrial Parks Development Corporation (IPDC) with the sole mandate of establishing and managing eight industrial parks comprising a total of 100,000 hectares of land and a total factory floor area of 20 million square metres (IPDC 2016). The aim is to create two million manufacturing jobs in medium and large businesses over the coming 10 years, by which time manufacturing should occupy four times the current share in GDP. The industrial parks are to focus primarily but not exclusively on light industries, and particularly on textiles. They are to be harnessed in the service of a larger vision of industrialization and structural transformation, as detailed in the country's second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTPII). This five-year plan, to run from 2015 to 2020, aims first and foremost to transition the economy from a dependence on agriculture to a reliance on industry (NCP 2015). And while the industrial parks are not the only plank in this vision, they can be said to be its centrepiece. 'Rapid industrialization and visible shift in the structure of the economy remains Ethiopia's unfinished agenda', states GTPII, before announcing the creation of the industrial parks project (NPC 2015, p. 10).

Chinese actors have been involved in the creation of Ethiopia's industrial parks since the beginning. Eastern Industrial Zone (also known as Oriental Industrial Zone) outside Addis Ababa is Ethiopia's first—and only privately-owned—park. Home to the much-studied and lavishly-feted Huajian shoe factory, it was established in 2007 by Chinese entrepreneur Lu Qiyuan, who is now its president. The zone soon inspired the creation of Bole Lemi Special Economic Zone, a government-run park also located just outside the capital. Delays around the construction of Bole Lemi prompted policymakers to centralize and intensify the process by creating the IPDC and announcing the creation of a new and improved pilot park in the southern city of Hawassa. The architect of this updated vision is Arkebe Oqubay, the very popular and influential former mayor of Addis Ababa. Arkebe,[7] who recently completed a PhD on industrial policy in Africa and now acts as special advisor to the Prime Minister, has been explicit as regards the roots of the current policy design:

> 'We said: If we have the aim of rapid growth of the manufacturing sector, it can't happen with the way we have been managing it. So, we tried to look at the approach of East Asia, for instance. We looked at the experiences of South Korea, Taiwan, China, Singapore, Vietnam, and from Africa we looked at Mauritius and Nigeria. And then we came up with a comprehensive policy package which we are now trying to implement. So, we have said we need this to focus on building these industrial parks, so that the limited resources we have, infrastructure, we can concentrate it for the manufacturing sector' (Arkebe 2015).

That China has been a particular source of inspiration is also clear. The China Association of Development Zones was contracted to oversee the writing of the IPDC's overall strategy; this think tank specializes in the construction of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and employs several Chinese communist party officials (interviewee 6).[8] Although China did not invent the SEZ model, no other country's development is today seen—both in Ethiopia and globally—as owing as much to its existence of this model. Ethiopia has long been regarded as particularly fertile ground for its replication in Africa (Brautigam and Xiaoyang 2011, IPRCC/UNDP 2015). But whereas Ethiopia treated its first two parks as 'ordinary industrial estates' (Brautigam and Xiaoyang 2011, p. 38), its current policy under the Arkebe has been much closer to the Chinese approach: investors are given unprecedented tax breaks and other concessions, as well as access to a government 'one-stop-shop' devoted (at least in theory) to clearing all bureaucratic and logistical obstacles from their path.

Ethiopia's ambitious industrial parks agenda represents an ideational—rather than a merely material—intersection with China. The material dimension is certainly present: almost half of Ethiopia's total FDI stems from China (interviewee 6). China is the country most represented among foreign manufacturers leasing sheds in those industrial parks already operational by early 2016: four of Hawassa's ten foreign investors and three of Bole Lemi's ten are either from mainland China or Hong Kong (Arkebe Oqubay, interview; interviewee 1). But while Chinese investors are therefore the most numerous, they do not predominate, with Turkish, Indian, Bangladeshi, South Korean, Taiwanese, Turkish and Sri Lankan investors also present in the existing parks. Those at the helm of Ethiopian industrial policy continually emphasise the importance of diversification of investors in order to avoid dependence on the fate of a single external economy (Arkebe Oqubay, interview). Where China does dominate, however, is as role model and policy template to the Ethiopian government. Thus while it is true that Chinese contractors have been awarded the majority of tenders to construct these parks, this economic engagement stems directly from the prior expertise that such companies have in constructing similar projects in China. Similarly, Chinese-owned factories in Ethiopia's industrial parks are notable not merely due to the scale of their presence, but

due to their attempts to replicate their prior positions in global value chains in a radically novel time and place.

The ideational entanglement resulting from this particular attempt at policy transfer plays a powerful role in both shaping and reflecting contemporary Ethiopian responses to modernity. While in this case it is difficult to discern an impact on answers to the scientific *problématique*, industrial parks represent a powerful coming-together of the economic and political *problématiques*.

Several concrete impacts can be discerned. Most importantly, the parks signify the ever-increasing distance—and perhaps even the immanent rupture—between the ruling coalition's top policymakers and its former socialist economic principles. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), headed by a student-led guerilla movement inspired by Enver Hoxha's model of Albanian communism, came to power through an armed struggle against a brutal Marxist-Leninist junta in 1991. For the past 25 years, the coalition has overseen the gradual liberalization of the economy. Many of the country's previously state-owned enterprises have been privatised and the leadership has gone to considerable lengths to attract FDI and promote its exports, leasing millions of hectares of agricultural land to foreign investors in the process. At the same time, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was remarkably adept at resisting demands from foreign donors to submit to the 'shock therapy' to which other countries with less policy space were subjected in the same era. As a result, all land remains the property of the state, as do key industries such as banking and telecommunications. The EPRDF draws much of its support from its vast network of politically mobilised smallholder farmers, and this sector still employs roughly 85% of the labour force (FAO 2014, p. 1). For this reason—as well as for the compromise between the hard-socialist 'old guard' and the reformers that it represents—the government has long espoused the notion that large-scale investment in smallholder agriculture would eventually result in industrialization. As even a longstanding critic of the EPRDF acknowledges, 'when the authorities and international donors say that few African governments, if any, have ever done so much for the peasantry, this is the absolute truth' (LeFort 2015, p. 367).

The industrial park agenda is largely an admission that 'agricultural development-led industrialization' has not occurred. In fact, the government of Ethiopia admits that the share of the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP actually shrank between 2009 and 2014 (NPC 2015, p. 5). The shares of the construction and service sectors have expanded, but almost entirely due to foreign investment rather than through the endogenous structural transformation that was originally envisioned.

The industrial parks are not the only ambitious economic initiative envisioned by the current five-year plan; the EPRDF also plans to create a series of 'integrated agro-industrial parks' around the country to integrate smallholder farmers directly into global agricultural value chains by linking them to

small-scale processing enterprises (PCP Ethiopia *n.d.*: 6). The agro-industrial parks and Arkebe's industrial parks are largely running on parallel tracks and inevitably compete for the same funding. Each represents a distinct vision of Ethiopia's future political economy: the former 'a smallholder, bottom-up agrarian agriculture that avoids FDI and focuses on agro-processing' and the latter 'an approach that says this will take too long, that FDI is important and that the urban setting is a great source of untapped potential' (interviewee 2). And while both are ultimately geared towards both structural transformation and integration into the global capitalist economy, they differ on the sequencing of these two key processes.

At the time of writing, Arkebe's vision has attracted more investment and is further along the path to fruition. If the parks are deemed to be even nearly as successful as is hoped, this will provide an immensely powerful symbol to legitimize the vision of reformers in the government and further the reach of capitalism into different spheres of Ethiopian political, economic and sociocultural life. As Arkebe (interview) himself admits, 'the effort we have put into Hawassa might be the effort we [could] have put into 20 parks…you cannot allow the pilot to fail. That's what China did—this whole new reform opening became successful because they succeeded in Shenzhen, the first pilot.' Thus the parks and the larger associated project to present Ethiopia as the most dynamic African economy become classic examples of boosterism, whereby locales such as cities or countries are marketed and ranked for purposes that are as much symbolic as they are practical. As several authors have pointed out, boosterism tends to be aimed at local as much as foreign audiences, allowing elites to construct a city-wide or national consensus while maintaining the interests of the central 'pro-growth coalition' (Hiller 2000; McCann 2013).

Already there signs that the very promise of the parks is contributing to shifts in discourse and attitudes. The marketing around the industrial parks repackages Ethiopia's extreme poverty not as evidence of the country's longstanding marginalization in the global political economy, or a means of leveraging additional aid from donors, but rather as the country's key comparative advantage. The aim is to position Ethiopia firmly as the next frontier in the global search for low wages once Asia is exhausted as a source of cheap labour (EIC 2016). Workers at Bole Lemi are paid an average of 700 Ethiopian birr (or 32USD) a month, and must often spend over half this amount on private accommodation near the park (interviewee 2).

Such low wages notwithstanding, there are indications that existing investors are unhappy: the existing parks struggle with very high worker turnover, particularly as they are located in close proximity to a large city with alternative employment opportunities (interviewee 3; interviewee 4). One Chinese investor I spoke to complained bitterly of having to adhere to Ethiopia's relatively strict labour law, which prohibits overtime and the moving of workers between positions without their consent (interviewee 4). Such pressure has led

the Ethiopian government to begin negotiations with investors on changes to the labour law that would allow for greater flexibility (Ahmed Nuru, interview). There are no workers' unions in the industrial parks, and according to one interviewee, *investors*' unions are closer to being established at the time of writing (interviewee 2).

The industrial park agenda is constructed according to the premise that Ethiopia has a historic and highly time-sensitive opportunity to take China's place in the global value chain: 'Either you win in the coming five years, or you lose' (Arkebe Oqubay, interview). This sense of urgency works to strengthen certain impulses within the ruling party while dampening others. Bole Lemi was built by 40 local contractors over the course of five years, with little oversight or central coordination on the part of the Ministry of Industrialization, which acted as supervising body. The park's construction is widely seen as having been a disaster, with the result that the coordination of new industrial parks was shifted to the newly-created IPDC. Arkebe (2015) vowed that no local companies would be permitted to bid for the construction of Hawassa, which was ultimately built in nine months by a Chinese company. The government has placed great emphasis on the incentives provided to local manufacturers who wish to invest in the park, but expects parity of output with foreign investors within three years (Arkebe Oqubay, interview); Hawassa has had great difficulty filling its envisioned quota of 30% local companies (interviewee 5).

The pressure to rapidly emulate China therefore contributes to a hitherto unprecedented opening-up to foreign capital in a country in which outside investment has historically been highly contested (and in certain quarters remains so). At the same time, China's example allows the leadership to decouple this economic liberalization from political reform—indeed, to make growth contingent on political stability. Aside from low wages, one of Ethiopia's key advantages is frequently held to be the capacity of the government to ensure a secure, stable and risk-free environment for investment (see for example Sopov, Sertse and Becz 2015). Thus daring economic reforms remain accompanied by authoritarianism in many spheres of political life (Abbink 2011).

Despite policymakers' attempts to control political and economic responses to modernity and globalization, modernities are, of course, not constructed by elites alone. Ethiopia's attempts at rapid industrialization have encountered strong mass resistance, especially in the historically-marginalised Oromia region around Addis Ababa. Since late 2015, hundreds of students and farmers have died protesting the expansion of the capital into surrounding farmland and in particular, the allegedly inadequate compensation offered by the government (Chala 2015). Despite the vast reserves of historic dissatisfaction and resistance on which the protests draw, many commentators agree that their sheer scale has been unprecedented (interviewee 7, interviewee 8). This resistance poses a not-insignificant threat to the government's plans to implement

GTPII: for the time being, the official expansion plan has been suspended, a sign that many take to signify recognition of the fundamental legitimacy of the protests (Muindi 2016). And while the Oromo protests may at present constitute the most visible sign of popular dissent, rising inequality and unemployment across the country represent potentially wider and even more explosive threats to the ruling coalition.

How then to reconcile the competing agendas of the ruling party's economic reformers, its old guard, and the vast mass of rural and urban poor to which the party seeks to appeal? The industrial parks will provide a litmus test: if they succeed in creating the millions of jobs and broad-based development that is promised, they will broadly be understood to 'prove' that political legitimacy can come from economic rather than political revolution. For the Oromia protests do not stem from a rejection of modernity, but from being denied its fruits—this is no post-development movement demanding to return to 'traditional' ways of life, but rather a set of demands for inclusion and equity (interviewees 6, 7, 8). Booming industrial parks would also increasingly limit the freedom of action of those within the EPRDF who still hope for a socialist solution to the problems of inequality and poverty, paving the way instead for Africa's first economy based on export-oriented manufacturing. In so doing, they would fundamentally cement a self-understanding based on state capitalism, even as they are currently intensifying contestation around this very principle.

A focus on intersecting modernities is interested in China not just as a monolithic and fixed reference point for Ethiopian emulators, but also as a collection of changing and changeable responses to the key questions of modernity. Yet paradoxically one of the outcomes of policy-oriented 'lesson-sharing' on the society being emulated is the impetus—from outside and from within—to convert an often messy and *ad hoc* historical trajectory into a formula for success. Exemplars are virtually compelled to examine and resell their own history, and to downplay the role of contingency and chance in the formation of this history. And while China's rapid industrialization since the establishment of Shenzhen SEZ undoubtedly owed much to dirigiste planning, it was arguably even more contingent on experimentation and luck (Jordan 2015; Heilmann 2007).

To a certain extent, Chinese actors in Ethiopia are acutely aware of the pitfalls of presenting their country's experiences as recipes for others to follow. A representative from the Chinese embassy expressed concern about the pace and ambitious nature of Ethiopia's vision: 'We also tell them our negative lessons, for example with industrial parks. We didn't control the quantity, and we didn't do it step by step. I'm not sure whether Ethiopia listens to those lessons.' He also credited China's reluctance to directly prescribe policy measures to Ethiopia as the key reason for the extremely close relationship between the two countries (interviewee 6). Whereas South Korea and Japan have each

created formal policy instruments to counsel the Ethiopian government on industrial policy, China's advice is given on a more informal, *ad hoc* basis.

Despite this reticence, being regarded as the primary template for a country's industrial park design does force Chinese actors to at least discursively reconstruct and reconsider the role that such parks played in the economic development of the country, as well as the role of China's authoritarian political environment in this process. Thus the Chinese state media uses Ethiopia's industrial parks vision as evidence of the importance both of government intervention in the economy, as well as of technocratic insulation from affected interested groups (Hou 2015a; 2015b). Similarly, the numerous Ethiopian delegations who visit China on lesson-drawing lessons are regularly taken to locales in which manufacturing-based 'miracles' are said to have manifested themselves (FDRE 2015)

At a time when China's economy is undergoing a period of uncertainty and transition, the fact that others wish to emulate China's history bolsters the idea of progress. Postmodern questioning is replaced with modernist certainty. On the one hand, then, a Chinese manager at a factory in Bole Lemi (interviewee 4) feels that industrialization has made his society 'too focused on making money…We are conflicted,' [asking ourselves] 'can money make me happy'? And now we're beginning to look for other philosophies'. Ultimately, however, he concludes that there is no alternative but for Ethiopia to industrialise in the same way:

> 'We are trying to change Ethiopian mindsets – they are smart, eager and hungry, and they are trying to change. But they are somehow confused…here everyone is very religious. Religious belief is good—we believe in God in China. But mostly we believe in these [holds up his hands]. Hard work can change your life. And it can go from generation to generation, making things better'.

As mentioned earlier, China's sharing of lessons in the realm of industrial parks strengthens the role of the Chinese state, even if private Chinese manufacturing and construction firms perform the bulk of the labour required to transmit these lessons. The Chinese government has until recently not kept formal records on the numbers or names of Chinese investors in Ethiopia (interviewee 6); however, this is likely to change after the creation, in April 2016, of a China-Africa Production Capacity Creation Plan that seeks to integrate all industrialization efforts into a single platform and thereby bring about 'the transfer of the whole industrial chain' between the two regions (Li 2016; Lelyveld 2015). A common complaint of both Chinese state and non-state actors is that the Ethiopian government does not provide as much infrastructure and amenities around the parks as Chinese regional governments did in the development in their own parks (interviewee 4, interviewee 6). The aforementioned Chinese manager threatened to leave Ethiopia entirely unless

it becomes more like Rwanda, a country with an even stronger—and more authoritarian—state (interviewee four).

Certain Ethiopian policymakers may wish to emulate China's industrial parks, but domestic limitations (such as the former's deeper ethnic divisions) and international constraints (such as dependence on donors and shifting international norms) lead them to temper this vision to at least some extent. Thus, for example, Hawassa has been designated a park with zero discharge of liquid waste, despite investor concerns (Arkebe Oqubay, interview). The IPDC does not allow foreign investors to build workers' dormitories on-site, despite the Chinese precedent, because 'it's like a prison' (Arkebe Oqubay, interview). Despite the ongoing negotiations on Ethiopia's labour laws, it is unlikely for a number of reasons that these will ever be as flexible as during the heyday of China's industrial parks. Chinese investors in Ethiopia are therefore in the interesting position of being subjected to rules they did not have to follow during their own country's rapid industrialization, much to their discomfiture. The attempted displacement of one societal self-understanding to another locale or historic period creates unforeseen tensions and is ultimately not possible, at least not in its entirety.

Conclusion

This article has taken as its point of departure a body of writing that, while spanning diverse disciplines and scientific worldviews, is fundamentally concerned with exploring the intangible impact that East Asia's growing engagement with Africa has had on the self-understandings of societies in both regions. The processes that such analyses detail are, I argue, best thought of as processes of intersecting modernities, within which modes of organization classically associated with modernization—the Westphalian state, the bureaucracy, the market—are perhaps often present, but not necessarily so. It should come as no surprise that new encounters between African and East Asian societies are creating new, hybrid forms of modernity, just as is now widely recognized has been the case since European societies first began to encounter their African and Amerindian counterparts.

When conceived of in this way, contemporary normative and discursive relations between East Asian and African societies demand a powerful new research agenda. It would be advantageous for such a research agenda, I argue, to draw on that large body of theory in the political sciences, critical geography and sociology that has sought to understand how political programmes, institutions and developmental visions have been transferred between locales. Methodologically, there is also the potential for multi-sited ethnographies to shed light on the socially constructed and reflexive nature of these processes.

It is perhaps understandable that scholars interested in the ideational impact of increasing Asian-African ties have thus far so rarely drawn on concepts

such as policy transfer, given the relative neglect that has run in the opposite direction. Theories of lesson-drawing and lesson-drawing have largely focused on a small number of industrialised countries in the Global North (Benson and Jordan 2011, p. 374), while the global spread and mutation of neoliberal policies from the Global North has functioned as the central case study for theories of policy assemblage (e.g. Prince 2010). Yet now, when 'South-South learning' dominates the World Bank's capacity-building projects and when discussions of the 'China Model' can be found in the pages of every major newspaper, it is surely time to reconcile the two foci and to explicitly ask to what extent East Asia's re-entry into Africa is causing societies in each locale to re-examine and reformulate their own development strategies.

The answer to this question is only now beginning to be explored. As the case of Ethiopia's industrial parks has shown, intersecting modernities do lead to re-articulations of existing self-understandings across radically different times and spaces, but do not do so in a straightforward and automatic way. Many gaps in our knowledge will need to be addressed: while it seems clear that policymakers in certain African countries are engaging in a demand-led process of lesson-drawing with certain Asian countries, does the reverse ever occur? To what extent does the financial support that countries such as China provides to African states underpin and enable the concomitant transfer of political programmes from donor to recipient? What tensions exist between African elites and publics (or even within groups of elites) when East Asian modernities are (re-)interpreted and (re-)imagined? These are complex questions of which the author hopes the new research agenda outlined here might aid researchers in pursuing more fully.

Key to Interviews:

All interviews were conducted in Addis Ababa.

Ahmed Nuru, Special Advisor to the State Minister for Industry. 31 May 2016.

Arkebe Oqubay, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister with the Rank of Minister. 20 May 2016.

Interviewee 1: Senior IPDC staff member, Bole Lemi industrial park. 25 May 2016.

Interviewee 2: Analyst, journalist and former staff member of Ethiopian Ministry of Finance. 24 May 2016.

Interviewee 3: Manager, Bole Lemi industrial park. 25 May 2016.

Interviewee 4: Manager of a Chinese-owned textile factory, Bole Lemi industrial park. 25 May 2016.

Interviewee 5: State Minister, Policy Study and Research Centre. 1 June 2016.

Interviewee 6: Representative, Chinese Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office, Embassy of the People's Republic of China. 4 June 2016.

Interviewee 7: Editor, Addis Standard. 24 May 2016.

Interviewee 8: Leader, Oromo People's Congress. 11 May 2016.
Interviewee 9: Analyst, Institute for Security Studies. 1 June 2016.

Acknowledgements

This article has benefited from the advice of a great many busy people, in particular: Peter Wagner, Emma Mawdsley, two anonymous reviewers, and the staff of the Globalization, Transnationalism and Development (GTD) research group in the University of Maastricht's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS). The author would also like to thank the University Fund Limburg (SWOL) and FASoS for funding the fieldwork that made this article possible.

References

Abbink, J 2011, 'Ethnic-based Federalism and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: Reassessing the Experiment after 20 years', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 596-618.

Appadurai, A 1996, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization; Vol. 1*, University of Minnesota Press, London.

Arkebe, O 2015, 'Interview: A singularly Focused Man', *Addis Fortune*, vol. 16, no. 808: http://addisfortune.net/interviews/interview-the-singularly-focused-man/.

Ashcroft, B 2009, 'Alternative Modernities: Globalization and the Post-colonial', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 81-106.

Bennett, C 1991 'What Is Policy Convergence and What Causes It?', *British Journal of Political Science,* vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 215–233.

Benson, D and Jordan, A 2012, 'Policy Transfer Research: Still Evolving, Not Yet Through?', *Political Studies Review*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 333-338.

Bräutigam, D and Xiaoyang, T 2011, 'African Shenzhen: China's Special Economic Zones in Africa', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 49, no.1, pp. 27-54.

Bräutigam, D 2015, *Will Africa Feed China?* Oxford University Press, New York.

Breslin, S 2011, 'The 'China Model' and the Global Crisis: From Friedrich List to a Chinese Mode of Governance?', *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 6, pp. 1323-1343.

Chala, E 2015, 'Violent Clashes in Ethiopia Over 'Master Plan' to Expand Addis', *Global Voices/Guardian Africa*: www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/11/ethiopia-protests-master-plan-addis-ababa-students.

China Daily, 2007, 'Turning to China for Role Model', *China Daily*, p. 27: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/200705/16/content_873305.htm

Comaroff, J and Comaroff, JL 2011, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving toward Africa*, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder, CO.

Dolowitz, DP and Marsh, P 2000, 'Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making', *Governance,* vol. 13, no.1, pp. 5-23.

Eisenstadt, SN 2000, 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus*, vol. 129, no. 1, pp. 1-29.

Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC), 2016, May. 'Invest in Ethiopia's Booming Textile and Apparel Sector', [Promotional leaflet].

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). 2016, September 9. 'Ethiopia: Prime Minister Hailemariam concludes China Visit', [press release]: http://allafrica.com/stories/201509101350.html.

Fitzgerald, D 2006, 'Towards a Theoretical Ethnography of Migration', *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 1-24.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2014, 'Country Fact Sheet on Food and Agriculture Policy Trends: Ethiopia': http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4181e.pdf.

Fourie, E 2012, A Future for the Theory of Multiple Modernities: Insights from the New Modernization Theory, *Social Science Information*, vol. 51, no.1, pp. 52-69.

Fourie, E 2014, Model Students: Policy Emulation, Modernization, and Kenya's Vision 2030, *African Affairs*, vol. 113, no. 453, pp. 540-562.

Fourie, E 2015, China's Example for Meles' Ethiopia: When Development 'Models' Land, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 289-316.

Frynas, JG and Paulo, M 2007, A New Scramble for African oil? Historical, Political, and Business Perspectives, *African Affairs*, vol. 106, no. 423, pp. 229-251.

Gaonkar, DP 2001, *Alternative Modernities; Vol. 1*, Duke University Press, Durham.

Hamlin, K, Gridneff, I and Davison, W 2014, 'Ethiopia Becomes China's China in Search for Cheap Labor', *Bloomberg*: http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-07-22/ethiopia-becomes-china-s-china-in-search-for-cheap-labor.

Heilmann, S 2008, 'Policy Experimentation in China's Economic Rise, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 1-26.

Hiller, H 2000, 'Mega-Events, Urban Boosterism and Growth Strategies: An Analysis of the Objectives and Legitimations of the Cape Town 2004 Olympic Bid', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 449-458.

Hou, L 2015a, 'One Man's Dream Transforms into Industrial Showcase', *China Daily*: http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/weekly/2015-07/17/content_21309023.htm.

Hou, L 2015b, 'Seeds of Industry', *China Daily*: http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/weekly/2015-07/17/content_21309022.htm.

Igbafen, ML 2014, 'South Korea's Development Experience as an Aid Recipient: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa', in EM Kim and PH Kim (eds.), *The South Korean Development Experience: Beyond Aid*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, UK, pp. 111-135.

Industrial Parks Development Corporation (IPDC), 2015, *Home* retrieved from www.ipdc.gov.et/index.php/en/.

International Poverty Reduction Center in China (IPRCC)/United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 2015, 'If Africa Builds Nests, Will the Birds Come? Comparative study on special economic zones in Africa', *Working Paper Series*, no. 6: http://www.cn.undp.org/content/dam/china/docs/Publications/UNDP-CH-Comparative%20Study%20on%20SEZs%20in%20Africa%20and%20China%20-%20ENG.pdf

Jordan, LS 2015, 'Learning by Doing: China-Africa Co-operation and State Learning', South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), *Policy Insights Series*,

no. 29, pp. 1-31: http://www.saiia.org.za/policy-insights/909-learning-by-doing-china-africa-co-operation-and-state-learning/file.

Kagame, P 2014, 'Rebooting Rwanda: A Conversation with Rwandan President Paul Kagame', *Foreign Affairs*, May/June.

Kang, DC 2002, *Crony Capitalism: Corruption and Development in South Korea and the Philippines*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Kelsall, T 2013, *Business, Politics, and the State in Africa: Challenging the Orthodoxies on Growth and Transformation*, Zed Books, London.

Kennedy, S 2010, 'The Myth of the Beijing Consensus', *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 19, no. 65, pp. 461-477.

Kurlantzick, J 2007, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Lefort, R 2015, 'The Ethiopian Economy: The Developmental State vs. The Free Market', in G Prunier and E Ficquet (eds.), *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi,* Hurst and Company, London.

Lelyveld, M. 2015, 'China Pushes Production Abroad with "Capacity Cooperation" Initiative', *Radio Free Asia*: http://www.rfa.org/english/commentaries/energy_watch/production-06082015110313.html

Li, K 2016, 'China Launches Industrial Cooperation Fund to Assist Africa's Development, *CCTV.com*: http://english.cntv.cn/2016/02/04/ARTIUFJisN9TuSKqJZj4xWlG160204.shtml

Linehan, D 2007,'Re-Ordering the Urban Archipelago: Kenya Vision 2030, Street Trade and the Battle for Nairobi City Centre, *Aurora Geography Journal*, no. 1, pp. 21-37.

Marcus, GE 1995, 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, pp. 95-117.

Mawdsley, E 2012, *From Recipients to Donors: Emerging Powers and the Changing Development Landscape*, Zed Books, London.

Mazzucato, V 2008, 'Simultaneity and Networks in Transnational Migration: Lessons Learned from an SMS Methodology', in J DeWind and J. Holdaway (eds.), *Migration and Development Within and Across Borders: Research and Policy Perspectives on Internal and International Migration,* International Migration Organization, Geneva, pp. 69-100.

McCann, E 2013, 'Policy Boosterism, Policy Mobilities, and the Extrospective City', *Urban Geography*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 5-29.

McCann, E and Ward, K 2012 'Policy Assemblages, Mobilities and Mutations: Toward a Multidisciplinary Conversation', *Political Studies Review*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 325-332.

McCann, E and Ward, K 2013, 'A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to Policy Transfer Research: Geographies, Assemblages, Mobilities and Mutations', *Policy Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 2-18.

Meagher, SM 2013, 'The Darker Underside of Scott's Third Wave', *City*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 395-398.

Mkandawire, T 2001, 'Thinking About Developmental States in Africa', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 289-314.

National Planning Commission (NPC), Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. 2015. *The Second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTPII) (Draft)*: https://www.africaintelligence.com/c/dc/LOI/1415/GTP-II.pdf.

Programme for Country Partnership Ethiopia (PCP). n.d. *Integrated Agro-Industrial Parks in Ethiopia:* https://isid.unido.org/files/Ethiopia/Integrated-Agro-Industrial-Parks-in-Ethiopia-Overview-document.pdf

Pow, CP 2014, 'License to Travel: Policy Assemblage and the 'Singapore model", *City*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 287-306.

Prince, R 2010, 'Policy Transfer as Policy Assemblage: Making Policy for the Creative Industries in New Zealand', *Environment and Planning*, vol. 42, no. 1, 169-186.

Ravallion, M 2009, 'Are there Lessons for Africa from China's Success Against Poverty?' *World Development*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 303-313.

Robertson, R 2001, 'Globalization theory 2000+: Major Problematics', in G Ritzer and B Smart (eds.), *Handbook of Social Theory*, Sage, London, pp. 458-471.

Rose, R 1991, 'What Is Lesson-Drawing?', *Journal of Public Policy,* vol.11, no. 1, pp. 3-30.

Sautman, B and Hairong, Y 2007, 'Friends and Interests: China's Distinctive Links with Africa', *African Studies Review*, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 75-114.

Shen, S 2009, 'A Constructed (Un)Reality on China's Re-entry into Africa: The Chinese Online Community Perception of Africa (2006-2008)', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 47, no. 3, pp. 425-448.

Sopov, M, Sertse, Y and Becz, G 2015, *Business Opportunities Report #1: Invest in Ethiopia*: https://www.nabc.nl/uploads/content/files/1EthiopiaBOR.pdf.

Taylor, I 2014, *Africa Rising? BRICS – Diversifying Dependency*, James Currey, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP.

Tejasvi, A 2007, 'South-South Capacity Development: The Way to Grow?', *Capacity Development Briefs,* no. 20, The World Bank Institute.

Thomassen, B 2012, 'Anthropology and its Many Modernities: When Concepts Matter', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 160-178.

Tugendhat, H and Alemu, D 2016, 'Chinese Agricultural Training Courses for African Officials: Between Power and Partnerships', *World Development*, no. 81, pp. 71-81.

Wagner, P 2008, *Modernity as Experience and Interpretation*. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Wagner, P 2012, *Modernity—Understanding the Present*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Watson, V 2013, 'African Urban Fantasies: Dreams or Nightmares?', *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 215-231.

Westney, D 1987, *Imitation and Innovation: The Transfer of Western Organizational Patterns to Meiji Japan*, Harvard University Press, London.

Woods, N 2008, 'Whose aid? Whose influence? China, Emerging Donors and the Silent Revolution in Development Assistance', *International Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 6, pp. 1205-1221.

World Bank Institute (WBI), Korea Development Institute (KDI), 2011, *Using Knowledge Exchange for Capacity Development: What Works in Global Practice?* WBI/KDI.

Wu, Z, Karp, P and Wang, Y 2010, 'China's International Poverty Reduction Center as a Platform for South-South Learning,' World Bank: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/6085.

Zhao, S 2010, 'The China Model: Can it Replace the Western Model of Modernization?', *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 19, no. 65, pp. 419-436.

Author Biography

Elsje Fourie is an Assistant Professor of Globalization and Development at the University of Maastricht. **Address:** Department of Technology and Society Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the University of Maastricht Grote Gracht 80-82, Maastricht 6211 SZ, The Netherlands. **Email**: e.fourie@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Notes

1 Many authors rightly point out the dangers in disembedding current African-Asian relations from their historical context, arguing that China and other Asian countries have long actively participated in a range of economic, political and cultural activities in African countries, particularly during the Cold War (Mawdsley 2012: 5). At the same time, these observers usually concede that recent economic growth in large parts of Asia has lent them a global role that has rendered current relations both qualitatively and quantitatively different.

2 East Asia is here taken to also encompass that sub-region often termed 'Southeast Asia'.

3 This article can offer only a brief overview of the contours of this debate; for a more extensive review of the literature, see Fourie (2013).

4 For an authoritative review of the classic early literature, see Onis (1991).

5 For a comprehensive overview of the literature, see Routley (2014). Other important works include Taylor's (2005) and Edigheji's (2010) respective examinations of Botswana and South Africa as developmental states.

6 As the final entry in this list demonstrates, the high modernist cities under discussion here are not exclusively—but merely primarily—in East Asia.

7 In keeping with standard practice, Ethiopian names (which are not comprised of first and last names but rather of personal names and patronyms) will be referred to in shortened form by personal name alone.

8 The primary data for this section was collected through interviews and site visits in Addis Ababa from May to June 2016. Interviewees are anonymized, unless consent was given to use informants' full details and informants' seniority makes knowledge of their positions integral to an understanding of their responses. Further information on specific interviewees can be found at the end of the article.