

Scientific Report for ESF

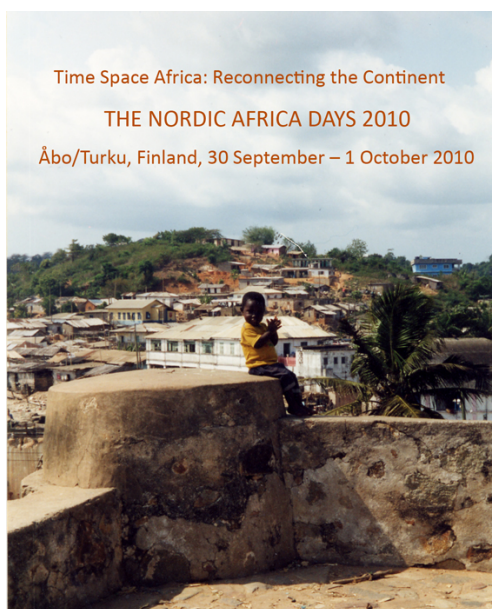
## **ABORNE Workshop on Secessionism in Africa**

in Åbo/Turku, Finland on 30.9. and 1.10. 2010

This science meeting was organized as a two-day panel within the Nordic Africa Days Conference 2010. The front page of the conference website is included below.

The full website is at <http://web.abo.fi/fak/hf/hist/nad2010>

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As the Åbo conference organizers have stated, there has been a spatial turn in thinking in the social sciences and humanities in the recent past. This has had a major impact on research on Africa as well. Landscapes and situated memories have become fluid categories in African studies, as elsewhere. Boundaries, territoriality and sovereignty are redefined and challenged. Violent conflicts and separatist movements often originate in, and thrive on the particular conditions that prevail in borderlands and can spill over the lines that supposedly divide sovereign states.

The two-day conference in Åbo had 23 panels with 185 participants from Europe, Africa and North America. ABORNE co-sponsored the attendance of one of the conference keynote speakers, Prof. Mahmood Mamdani from Makerere University, Uganda and Columbia University, USA. His keynote speech on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October was titled *Human Rights: The African Experience and the Way Forward*.

The ABORNE panel (panel L) on Secessionism in Africa was organized to contribute, with a specific thematic focus, to the overall conference theme.

As part of its publication series with Palgrave Macmillan, ABORNE is planning a comprehensive edited volume covering all significant cases of secessionism, which occurred on the African continent since independence. Although a rich literature on individual cases studies exists as well as some works dealing with secessionism in Africa in a comparative fashion, surprisingly to date nobody has ever published a comprehensive book on a topic of such fundamental importance to recent history, post-colonial state formation and politics in Africa.

The editors (Jordi Tomas, Lisbon University and Wolfgang Zeller, Edinburgh University) have previously collaborated on a new edited collection on the same topic in Spanish language (Tomas, J. (ed.): *Secesionismo en Africa*, Edicions Bellaterra, Barcelona, 2010). The current project intends to expand this idea into a rigorously peer-reviewed and edited English-language volume of the highest scholarly standard that aspires to define this research field for the foreseeable future. The volume will bring chapters addressing all major cases of secessionism in Africa since independence together in one book. Introductory and concluding chapters will thoroughly review the existing scholarship in this field and discuss the individual cases in relation to each other and a number of topics of broader relevance.

To ensure that the case studies selected for the book on secessionism are also comparable the editors requested all chapter authors to address a number of key questions. All chapters are to include a detailed section on the historical roots of the secessionist movement, a chronology of key events, and an assessment of the recent/present political situation in the area.

The Åbo meeting was the first of two conference panels where draft chapters for the book were presented. The second meeting will take place at the 2011 ECAS4 conference in Uppsala, Sweden June 15-18.

The Åbo meeting consisted of 4 separate sessions with presentations of 8 case studies and extensive discussion of each case individually and in relation to the overall book project. In addition, four participants of panel L presented a summary of the panel discussions to the conference's closing plenary session.

A comprehensive summary of the panel discussions would go beyond the scope of this report. What follows is a list of key topics that emerged from the meeting to be of wider relevance across the individual case studies. All of these topics will be addressed in the introductory and concluding chapters of the forthcoming book, to which all participants from panel L are firmly committed to contribute.

- secessionism versus irredentism
- ideas of divided sovereignties
- mono-ethnic secessionist movements versus cases of pluri-ethnic "secessionist nationalism"
- the productivity of the margins argument and the power of non-settlement of disputes
- the specific rhetoric and demands of secessionist movements
- showmanship and rhetoric tactics versus sustained and outcome-oriented political programme
- (re-) interpretations of key historical events by secessionist movements as legitimization strategy
- arguments over the historio-legal grounds of secession (e.g. pre-independence treaties, discrepancies in maps & treaties, referenda and power-sharing agreements)

- claims and ideas of historical 'betrayal' as the source of secessionist claims
- colonialism, borders and secessionist movements
- cross-border migration, diaspora and secession
- the transition from peaceful opposition to violent movements and the role of state repression
- cross-border migration and secession
- mineral resources feeding secessionism
- land ownership laws, expropriation and conflicts
- the role of educational and other elites in raising secessionism
- catholicism and religion in secessionist movements
- the diffusion of secessionist ideas via the Internet and other new technologies
- regional specificities: the Horn of Africa as separatist hotbed?

The editors of the forthcoming book are now preparing a draft outline of the introduction chapter based on a more extensive summary of the discussions at the Abo science meeting. This draft outline in turn informs the individual feedback given to the panellists that will guide the editing process of the draft chapters they have presented. It also serves as a guideline for the authors of those additional book chapters, which will be presented at the forthcoming ECAS4 conference in Uppsala, Sweden.

The overall aim is to submit a first complete draft manuscript for the book to the ABORNE-Palgrave series editors by the end of 2011.

## Panel L: Secessionism in Africa - program

### Session 1

Thu 13-16

Panel Introduction	Jordi Tomas & Wolfgang Zeller (U of Lisbon & Edinburgh)
Case 1: Ogaden	Sarah Vaughan (University of Edinburgh)
Case 2: Eritrea	Alexandra Dias (University of Lisbon)

### Session 2

Thu 16:30 - 18

Case 3: Somaliland	Markus Hoehne (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology)
Case 4: Nigeria	Johannes Harnischfeger (University of Frankfurt)

### Session 3

Fri 11-13

Case 5: Casamance	Vincent Foucher (University of Bordeaux)
Case 6a: Barotseland	Wolfgang Zeller (University of Edinburgh)
Case 6b: Caprivi	Henning Melber (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation)
Commentary on cases 5 & 6	Pierre Engelbert (Pomona College)

### Session 4

Fri 14-15:30

Case 7: Equatorial Guinea	Justo Bolekia (University of Salamanca)
Case 8: Comoros	Gregor Dobler (University of Freiburg)

End panel discussion: Secessionism and the Legacy of Colonial Partitioning in Africa

Fri 16-17

panelists: Paul Nugent (University of Edinburgh)  
Henning Melber  
Pierre Englebert