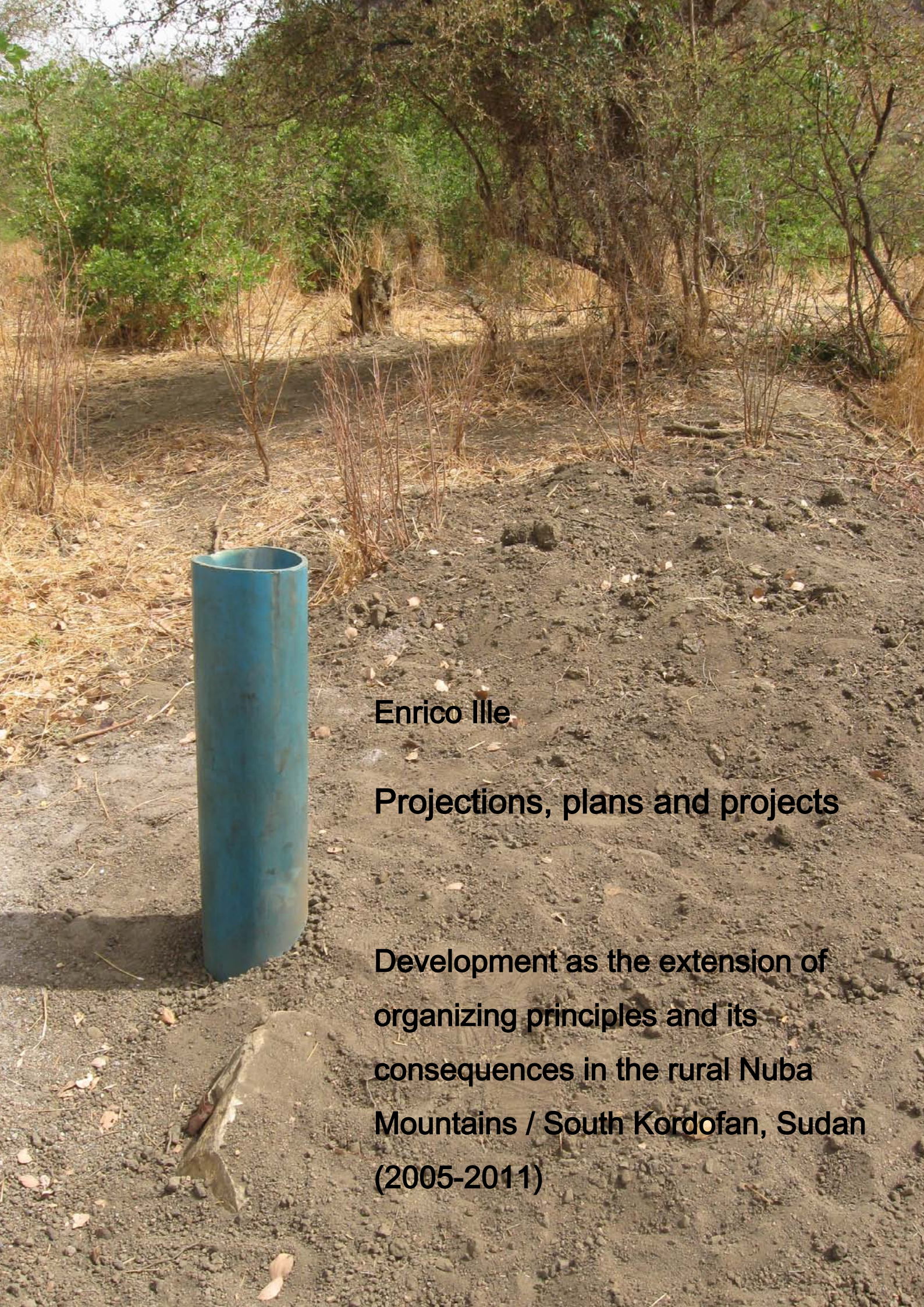

Enrico Ille

# Projections, plans and projects

## Development as the extension of organizing principles and its consequences in the rural Nuba Mountains / South Kordofan, Sudan (2005-2011)

ilri Bibliothek Wissenschaft, Band 10

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**Cover photograph:** Water yard in Abol, suggestively unfinished, 24 April 2009 (Enrico Ille)

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# Contents

## A map

The Nuba Mountains, situated in the state of South Kordofan in the Republic of Sudan, have throughout history been a 'remote' area: a stage for moving and removing in different ways. Viewed as a region,[1] one of its major characteristics has always been a certain unsteadiness, which contrasts with the steadiness of its defining physical feature, the mountains themselves. Although some of its hill communities remained more or less untouched for extended periods,[2] documented traces of its history are full of movement: inter-communal warfare, slave raids, militarily enforced 'peace' and resettlement, civil war and flight, with the addition of religious missions, labour, educational and professional migration, and occasional tourism. At least since the integration of individuals from the Nuba Mountains into slave armies,[3] especially during Turkish rule (1821-1885) and the Islamic movement of the Mahdi (1885-1898), there has been also a pattern of return of those who, though born and raised in the mountains, subsequently spent time as part of a very different social environment, often many years. As most of these groups had themselves been immigrants into the refuge of the Nuba Mountains, as 'refugees', so to speak, these long dynamics of manifold movements and survival through isolation have nurtured a complex relationship between social worlds, in times of Turkish whips and Nubian traders as well as in times of Antonov bombers and mobile phones.[4]

Although Muslim traders living among hill communities had already brought some kind of institutional pluralism, the advent of British colonial rule and its Native Administration system was probably the first time that any institutions other than those generated in and by the communities themselves had gained hold over wide areas of the region; its impact still shapes public administration to this day.[5] But it is the uncertain role of such 'newcomers' to be both destroyers and constructors during decades of political violence and development projects, which bore the ambiguities of today's attempts to develop the region. It is these ambiguities that both form and inform the following text.

The specific area under discussion, nowadays known as *rīfī* Heiban,[6] lies in the eastern region of the Nuba Mountains. Heiban developed rather recently as a regional as well as an ethnic notion, especially under influence of British colonial rule. Hill communities in the area have often been in more or less intensive contact with neighbouring communities, blurring any concept of fixed borders between 'tribal territories'.[7] The identification of a group of hill communities, and later of a rural region, under the name Heiban was a process on which colonial administrators had a crucial impact, for instance, by establishing an administrative centre called Heiban near settlements around Ebaŋ mountain. However, in present

discussions about the region, its scope, and its most likely urbanized centre (Heiban or Kauda), this process is subject to immensly diverging interpretations.[8]

Before a recent war (1987-2002), the rural town of Heiban had been an area of touristic quality, to which, for instance, art students from the University of Dilling travelled for one or two months every year, living in guest houses and drawing pictures of the landscape. With the war and the dismantling of public buildings by armed forces, the population became concentrated and movement in the area was placed under close control. The hills were occupied by the military as posts from which they could observe the whole valley and shoot rockets and grenades into the mountains and at any sign of human movement outside the town, whether of civilian farmers or so-called rebel soldiers.

Large scale fighting stopped here only after a Ceasefire Agreement was signed in 2002 by the major antagonists, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement / Army (SPLM/A) and the Government of Sudan (GoS), based in the capital Khartoum. This was followed by extensive peace talks conducted in Kenya, which resulted in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed on January 9th, 2005. The crucial agreement was the right of the southern areas of Sudan to opt for either independence from or unity with the north through a referendum in 2011. On July 9th, 2011, South Sudan became an independent country. The remaining areas, namely the federal states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, as well as the contested border region of Abyei, which were not clearly established as being controlled by either party, were supposed to engage in so-called 'popular consultations' about their future status.

This agreement did not stop the multitude of armed conflicts in the Sudan: In Darfur, a region that had suffered unrest for decades, a full-scale war broke out in 2003, and still continues.[9] In the Red Sea state, the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement stopped the open, armed resistance of the Eastern Front in October 2006, but this cessation of violence remains uncertain. In Abyei, a small oil-rich region on the border between northern and southern Sudan, a clash between SPLA and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) nearly destroyed the central town of the region in May 2008, and new fighting in May 2011 led to the full military manifestation of accumulated tensions. In June 2011, South Kordofan was once again engaged in a full-scale war; Blue Nile followed in September 2011.

In spite of similar structural conditions underlying these recurring wars,[10] the way they are fought has changed immensely due to the advent of navigation by GPS, satellite telephone, and solar batteries. New technologies have not only multiplied the possibilities for information, they have also changed the organizational practices of those involved in the fighting. What has not changed, though, are the difficulties of providing food and water to those remaining in war areas.

This particular provision has always been a matter of concern in the region,[11] as it relates to the basic questions of human survival: how to make enough food and water available? How to know and decide what is 'enough'?

Neither of these questions have been answered in a such a way as to establish stable arrangements or non-violent contest in the region. The fragility of both previous and present arrangements leaves room for substantial improvement. A dominant concept used to describe such desired improvement is that of 'development'; the following text portrays some of the attempts at 'development' made in Heiban between the promises of a signed peace agreement (2005) and the restart of an old war (2011).

In a nutshell, I am interested here in the implications of development projects as emerging social sites in Heiban between 2005 and 2011. The analysis starts with the preconception that 'development', as an organizational field, is formed of intertwined political and technical processes. 'Political' in this context refers to the act of defining 'problems'; in other words, the process by which it is decided that something either is or is not a problem. 'Technical' here refers to the finding of solutions to these defined problems. In the course of the argument, prioritization is proposed as the element that makes their co-existence inevitable: Various decisions about what is more or less important define courses of action in both.

Because this decision-making process cannot be reduced to a set of simple, single organizing principles, its analysis requires various flexible perspectives. In consequence, the chosen textual strategy works with different points of view, in order to produce an analysis that is simultaneously both linear and cyclical – linear in its transformation of fieldwork-based anecdotal observations into a successive narrative; cyclical in the sense that it employs successive different perspectives in the process of doing so. Thus, rather than suggesting 'the' reading of 'the' situation, I present instead several different readings of situations and their context. To reflect this, the text is therefore organized in a particular form, reflected in the organization of the contents as a table displaying both rows and columns.

The rows in the contents represent case-studies based on specific issues, namely food production, water supply, extension of infrastructure, and processes of information.[12] Each row, then, can be taken to indicate the unfolding of a particular 'cycle' of interpretation, each corresponding to a specific issue, or identified 'problem'.

Following a theoretical introduction in Row 1, the main focus is on four development projects and their context in Heiban town and two adjacent villages, Abol and Kubang.

Row 2 discusses an initiative of migrants from Heiban living in Khartoum to establish a cooperative for agricultural production in their home region. The case study is presented on the background of existing organizational practices of agricultural production in Heiban and of international and national discourses on food security and agricultural modernization.

Row 3 looks at an attempt by two international organizations to solve problems of water supply in Abol, specifically through the construction of micro-dams and through the provision of a water yard. The background is given here through the mapping of existing water sources in the village, and a description of international and national programmes for water supply in South Kordofan.

Row 4 takes up the issue of rural areas' connections to supra-regional infrastructural networks through the case study of road construction in Kubang. The question of how connections are created is first outlined briefly through a glimpse at the Nuba Mountains' colonial history. This is then supplemented with an examination of larger-scale infrastructural programmes in the region.

Finally, row 5 redraws recent attempts to create a network of village development committees in and around Heiban through a programme instigated by the international organization IFAD. These attempts are viewed as connected with trial attempts at creating networks for development-related information flows. The structural problems involved in such trials are discussed through a staff member's experiences of data production in a South Kordofan-related development project, with the addition of short outlines of other efforts to create information management systems for the region.

The argumentative logic of the rows is thus problem-oriented: How to increase the output of agricultural production? How to increase the availability of water? How to connect rural areas? How to know what rural areas have and need?

The rationale of the columns is to focus attention on the particular perspective underlying their chapters. Two sets of perspectives are thereby developed. Columns 1 and 2 combine ethnographic observations and their analysis. Column 1 concentrates on narrative approaches to the raised issues by asking: What issues are of concern, and to whom, in situations that I, as fieldworker, have encountered? Column 2 contains systematic analyses related to these issues, yet also highlights the existing heterogeneity of epistemological practices.

Columns 3 to 5 relate form and content in a different way.[13] The elements 'situation assessment', 'definition of objectives', 'planning', 'implementation', and 'monitoring & evaluation' are the basic phases in many cyclic models of development project management (GTZ 1996, NORAD 1999, EU 2004). They are used here to indicate the various interrelated perspectives employed to analyse the implications of development projects on different scales: Column 3 discusses how the future is problematized in international and national development discourses by pointing at disparities between 'probably will be' and 'should be', referred to in this text as *projections*. Several models and practices of projecting scenarios of

the ‘future’ are presented in their relation to ongoing development programmes in Sudan, especially in South Kordofan.

Column 4 examines documentation relating to planning activities, such as governmental five-year plans, strategic maps, and programme outlines of international development organizations. It also offers a critique of the plans’ assumptions and their political implications. Finally, column 5 follows narrative accounts and my own observations of resulting practices in specific projects.

The resulting text does not endeavour to thoroughly discuss the complex theoretical debates touched on by the perspectives taken, but rather aims to instrumentally raise ‘conceptual awareness’ of the case studies. The terminology developed to this end consists of core elements (titles of the columns and introductory chapters), and auxiliary terms, which are employed only sparingly in the interests of legibility.

## Acknowledgments

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I dedicate this text to my three families, who struggle, each in their way, with 'the system'.

Halle, January 18th, 2013

## Preface

*Zamān mā kān ᶜindanā mustaqbil.* (In former times, we had no future.)

Kamāl Yussif, speaking about a feeling of contentment that is past,
March 17th, 2008, Omdurman.

Two schools line the main road of the rural town of Heiban. The fresh white paint on the walls of one of them has not yet disappeared under a cover of fine brownish dust. The other school lies still in bombed-out ruins. The presence of both characterizes a place caught in cycles of construction and destruction.

On March 18th, 2010, the last day of my fieldwork,[14] I passed the morning in the home of my host family in Heiban. When I woke up, several hens were in my room pecking at the sorghum grains that had fallen beside the iron barrel containing the stored grain. I could hear the boar near the sorghum-stalk fenced bathroom as it tried to remove the bricks I had laid to prevent the pigs from digging in the wet soil. When I left the cool *ɾakōba*,[15] a sun-roof around my room, I saw *ḥabōba*, the grandmother, with a two-metre long hoe, as she prepared the field inside the courtyard for cultivation. She was probably well over 70, but she started the new agricultural year earlier than many others, who waited for signs of rain before beginning preparations. The last harvest had been good, but the timing and amount of this year's rain would determine to a great extent how scarce food would be the next season, and, therefore, whether livestock would have to be sold to buy grain.

I greeted Saᶜadiyya, the only daughter still staying with *ḥabōba* at home. In her language, *ḍaabəlâ,*[16] I said '*awɛŋɛɾá*,' - 'Are you fine?' She answered '*ɲí gɛ́ŋɛr';* 'I am fine'. Two goats used the leather strings of a wooden bed, the *ᶜangarēb*, to scratch their back by passing beneath them; I chased them away before sitting down for the black morning tea. Saᶜadiyya waived a small fan, the *habāba*, to keep the fire going between the three stones on which the pot of water rested. Smoke from the burned wood surrounded her and did not bother the hens, who tried to take leftovers before being put to noisy flight over and over again. Jijiyya,[17] her youngest daughter, brought the glasses, while her son, Kuku, returned by bicycle from the market with milk powder and *ᶜēsh,* the round sorghum bread.[18]

The house was adjacent to a quarter called 'Fellata', after migrants from West Africa who had previously lived there, practicing mostly pastoral nomadism, and who had left the area during the war. In the few relatively stable years after 2002, they had returned to camps near the town. They had also resumed selling milk at some places, but my host family preferred the rather expensive, but non-perishable, milk powder from the national capital, Khartoum. Bread was also a rather costly pleasure, and most meals consisted of red sorghum porridge,

*ᶜasīda*, and thin red sorghum sheets, *kisra*, poured over with *mulāḥ*, a sauce existing in many variations, based on ladies' fingers, or tomato pulp, or spinach, among others.[19] Although meat was one of the most expensive items, whether mutton, beef, chicken, or pork, Saᶜadiyya, who owned a restaurant in the market and had worked as a cook for the organization NCA, managed to keep it on the menu, together with tomato salad and roasted potatoes. Fruits, however, remained a luxury during the dry season, apart from the occasional banana; mango and guava would be abundant in the rainy season, in June or July.

After saying '*maᶜa salāma'*, 'goodbye' in Arabic, I left for the market. I met the sister of *ḥabōba*'s husband's second ex-wife Ḥabība near the door. She had brought a 16-litre plastic barrel full of water on her head, as she did many times throughout the day. Many women were on the road, some coming to Heiban with something to sell, some leaving with something bought. On the way I passed the electrical mill of a trader, where mostly women and girls waited to get their grains ground into flour. On the other side of the road, another trader had stored the sorghum from his mechanized farm, and a red Massey Ferguson tractor rested in front of his house.

It was Thursday, the weekly market day, which filled the rural town with moving people and moving commodities. The market place was covered with little plastic-roofed shops, and, like most of their goods, the owners came from towns in the north: Umm Ruwabah, El Obeid, Kosti, Khartoum.[20] Goods from industrial production changed hands: sugar, sweets, and biscuits from domestic industrial production, and imported tea, coffee, and spices; but also vegetables, fruits, and grains from larger agricultural schemes with lower prices, which competed with small-scale producers for customers and land. Several boys stood in front of boards selling bread and groundnuts in little plastic bags, the latter of which had started to cover the grounds of the town. Girls assisted tea sellers, whose appeal was sometimes not only the quality of their tea and coffee, but also the chance of the occasional flirtation with their diverse customers. Beside one group of tea drinkers, an old man displayed a small heap of mangos from the tree he owned.

Near a small livestock market, boys were sitting around, enjoying small talk, playing cards, gameboys, games of skill with little stones, football, or playful wrestling. Others sat on donkeys with carts to transport purchases home; some of them had put an iron barrel into the wooden frame of their cart and brought water to homes and shops. While the majority of women and girls, and sometimes also men and boys, took the water from one of the scattered manual water pumps, the boys with donkey carts went to the water yard, called *donkī* or *siḥrīğ*. An old guard stayed there, collecting fees from the users. Each day a lorry with a tank came by, belonging to the Joint Military Units stationed outside the town.[21]

Hundreds of soldiers were supplied with this water, and their demand was more than once a source of grievances, when the water pumped up every night was no longer enough for all the other inhabitants of the town.

I arrived at the bus station to greet one of the bus line owners, who was busy arguing with the paid labourers who handled the luggage of people heading for Khartoum. Nearby new shops had been opened by young men, a studio with digital cameras, a motorcycle workshop with spare parts, and a mobile phone shop with recharging services for the multitude of mobile phone owners without electricity at home. The shops were colourfully designed with a mishmash of pictures and euphemistic names like *istudiū awlād al-rabb*, 'the studio of God's children'. A huge electricity station was situated nearby, the hardware of which had been installed in the early 2000s, funded by the central government in Khartoum. It was meant to ensure the political loyalty of a population surrounded by a ring of military posts and violent clashes, but it had never produced either loyalty or electricity. At that time the installation was finally complete, but work on cables to the houses was not finished by the time a new war broke out.

The town's new administrative structures had been established slowly throughout more recent years, without necessarily creating clarity and certainty: until 2009, Heiban hosted two separate, mutually hostile police forces; one stationed in buildings attached to the mosque, the other in the former, partly destroyed boarding school. Near the power station was a bombed prison; big warehouses opposite the market, once used by traders, still lay empty; like the many other deserted buildings, reminders of the latest war. At other places in the town construction was in full swing, as at the site of the new building for the locality's administration and that of a Christian theological college funded by the organization Samaritan's Purse.[22] Lorries filled with sand from a seasonal riverbed drove by, and many young men hung around hoping for work at a construction site. Near the riverbed, little kiosks for sorghum beer, *marīsa*, had been built by the town's administration, after the old private huts had been demolished.

Only two years later, bombs falling on Heiban tore down buildings again. Already during my stay, whenever I saw soldiers on leave walking around with their AK-47s, or land cruisers filled with soldiers leaving to their posts, I was reminded of the persistent presence of military rule, and how much it dominated Heiban. Military violence had overshadowed the town and the rest of the Nuba Mountains for far longer than the current troubles. Foundations and structures had been repeatedly destroyed or torn down even before the Second Civil War (1983-2005); and foundations and structures had been continually built and rebuilt before the most recent period between the wars (2005-2011). In the following text, I aim to illustrate some of these processes of destruction and construction.

# 1 Introduction

At almost any moment, people are up to something, pursing ends and carrying out projects. On encountering or learning about this or that, they hold up their activity, pursue different courses of action, alter plans, and so on. What I call the phenomena that “lead to” actions are the phenomena that induce people to hold up, divert, alter. These phenomena cause changes in the flow of action.

Theodore R. Schatzki, *The site of the social*
(Schatzki 2002: 42)

## 1A: Topography

Fieldwork has probably the most undisputed right to exist in anthropology as an academic discipline. A line could be drawn, for instance, from one of the discipline's mystical ancestors, Malinowski, and his introduction to "field work" in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski 1922/1984), to one of the numerous recent publications about the redefinition of 'the field', such as James D. Faubion and George E. Marcus' volume about fieldwork as *Anthropology's Method in a Time of Transition* (Faubion & Marcus 2009).

I will relate here to three questions about fieldwork, in order to clarify the perspective I intend to take up under the title 'topography'. The scope of 'the field' has been increasingly debated during the last decades, specifically its spatiality, its temporality, and its division into observers and observed. Let me start with the spatial aspect, with the specific question: *Where* is 'the field'?

The 1990s, under the significant influence of what has been called 'globalization' saw an increasing questioning of one-sited ethnography; one possible solution to its identified limitations being a shift to multi-sited ethnography. An iconic contribution to this terminology was made by George E. Marcus, who demanded different "'tracking' strategies" to be followed (Marcus 1995: 95). Gupta and Ferguson too, questioned the utility of a "methodological commitment to spend long periods in one localized setting" (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 4) and proposed adopting a "multistranded methodology for the construction of […] 'situated knowledges'" (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 37).

This was not the first attempt to go beyond concepts of closed, ideally coherent 'local communities'. Another approach adopted was that of including 'the context', for example, by adopting an extended-case method.[23] The rationale for extending cases is the acknowledgment that 'the local' consists of not merely the observable present, but emerges from the situational interaction of structures and events on different temporal and spatial scales, thus providing locations, or sites, for specific social action. Since structures can only be derived from a number of local, situational observations, not only does the problem of aggregation appear, but also the associated question: *When* is 'the field'?

The answers that most closely approach what is intended by my argument oscillate between the terms 'situation' and 'process', in which the former is encountered and the latter drawn together[24]. Situational analysis, for example, is concerned with the relations of concrete social interactions to the social worlds they take place in.[25] In the form implied here,[26] situational analysis pays attention to the variety of narrative, visual and historical discourses involving and involved with that situation, including its non-human elements. This includes

the situatedness of the researcher, who aims to translate social situations into a textual representation[27], leading to the question: *Who* is 'the field'?

The relation between researcher and study objects/subjects is probably the most disputed part of anthropology. A substantial crisis was suggested by the so-called Writing Culture debate, the most valuable lesson of which is arguably the importance of remaining sensitive to the cognitive processes involved in fieldwork and ethnography, which suggests making the researcher visible without making him or her the main issue.[28] It is the latter that needs to be communicated, if fieldwork-based ethnography is understood as making sense of an interstitial space between cognitive and communicative processes in both a hosting field *and* in a hosting academic environment.[29]

In short, the practical problem considered here is that of formulating which issues relate my fieldwork observations and my academic environment through the text. In other words: What are the topics?

Following the previous lines of thinking, my formulation of topics begins with social situations, and attempts to determine what constituted their current appearance by relating them to contextual processes. This is necessarily connected with intersubjective exposure, which conveys a sense of recurrence and urgency of this or that topic. It is one of the challenges of qualitative research to represent this sense of recurrence convincingly outside the context of its occurrence. 'Topography' is the approach chosen here.

A conventional usage of the term 'topography' comes from geography, where the term refers to the description or mapping of certain environmental characteristics of a specific place, the 'world' as it is; the ontological stage of human action, so to speak.[30] The etymological root of the first part of this terminology, the Greek *tópos*, means 'place, location', and includes – via the designation of places where certain figures of speech were used – *these figures of speech themselves* (Kluge & Seebold 1989: 732). In relation to the preceding thought process, a *tópos* should therefore be understood, in the context of this text, as any locally recurrent feature that, through its consistent appearance in my long-term fieldwork, has come to be perceived by me as being of fundamental importance.

In this sense, my topographical narratives present the result of a filtering process, by which cognitive processes engaged in during my fieldwork were reduced to an itinerary that reflects how the conviction that 'such-and-such is an issue' came about. To this end, suggestive, 'thick' narratives[31] are formed so as to act, in a figurative sense, as 'reflective strolls': The narratives interweave conversations with descriptions to draw together a topographical site.

## 1B: Epistemology

The above description implies that the re-presentation of such a site also has a negative component – the result of excluding aspects. It is in this sense that John Law described (and questioned) 'method', when he stressed its performative character, in the sense that it "helps to produce realities" (Law 2004: 143). This happens through "a continuing process of crafting and enacting necessary boundaries between presence, manifest absence and Otherness", because "presence is impossible without absence" (Law 2004: 144). It is thus the process of making parts of 'what is out there' visible, while ignoring or rendering invisible others, that decides how *representations* of realities are produced. The absences, the invisibilities created by such representations comprise a contentious, political aspect.

Consequently, this pertains also to representational practices other than ethnography. Let me approach the implications of this aspect through some examples, which will also serve to prepare the ground for the topics to be discussed later on (agricultural production, water availability, extension of infrastructure, and data production).

The first example deals with the problem of modernizing agriculture, often connected to the question of mechanization. James C. Scott argued that so-called high-modernist agriculture implies "radically simplifying […] farms and fields so they can be more directly apprehended, controlled, and managed" (Scott 1998: 262). He outlined several aspects of agricultural production, where this simplification took place, namely the standardization through "monocropping, mechanization, hybrids, the use of fertilizers and pesticides, and capital intensiveness" (Scott 1998: 266). I want to focus here on the aspect of spatial organization, namely the development of "large, finely graded fields" and "uniform irrigation" (Scott 1998: 268).

In Scott's argument, the following happened in agricultural development interventions in Africa, continuing on from colonial experiments: The multiplicity of crops cultivated by 'the indigenous' on the same fields was perceived as indicative of a lack of ability to organize or even understand the process of 'taming' nature (Scott 1998: 273). The unpredictability created by "fugitive" fields in shifting cultivation was seen as challenge to the mapping and managing of land and population (Scott 1998: 282). The combination of different cultivation methods on single farms were regarded as inferior to the clarity produced by experimental farms with their presumed control of all significant cultivation variables (Scott 1998: 285). In short, instead of complex, experienced farmers with "something of a small-scale experimental station" in their own right (Scott 1998: 285), those interventions dealt with "fictional farmers" (Scott 1998: 299) and thereby missed the chance to create a cognitive and communicative link to the realities of their 'beneficiaries'.[32]

This has been debated as neglect of so-called indigenous knowledge, and gave way to concepts of epistemological plurality in development discourses.[33] In a more general sense, these concepts are critical of the exclusive claims of universal epistemological technologies such as 'scientific' methods, and their unquestioned superiority to allegedly limited, 'local' knowledge.

An example is the representation of 'reality' through maps. Tim Ingold described the situation of a stranger, who uses an artefactual map as a means of orientation, in contrast to that of a 'native', who finds his way without a map. The native may be regarded as having a mental map as guidance, but Ingold refuted such a supposition as referring to a system of coordinates comparable with the coordinates on the stranger's map. The native's places "do not have locations but histories" (Ingold 2000: 219), they "exist not in space but as nodes in a matrix of movement" (Ingold 2000: 219).

The gist of his further argument is "that no map, however 'modern' or sophisticated the techniques of its production, can be wholly divorced from the practices, interests and understandings of its makers and users" (Ingold 2000: 225). While this is a necessary point to question any illusions of representing "'the geographic facts' on the ground within a single, universal system of spatial coordinates" (Ingold 2000: 230), what happens in situations in which maps are supposed to answer specific questions?

In so-called natural resource management, for example, nature is divided into managed and unmanaged parts, suggesting different levels of predictability – degrees of certainty about what natural resources will be available, and about how, where, and when. In situations in which people draw their water from seasonally fluctuating sources, for example, this striving for predictability is an essential part of human ecology. Considering, then, the potential of maps and other technologies to increase predictability, it is no longer just an issue of *different* ways, but an urgent question of *better* ways.

Ingold distinguished between mapping, where maps are "by-products of story-telling" (Ingold 2000: 234), and map-making, "end-products of projects of spatial representation" (Ingold 2000: 234). In this terminology, the aim of 'story-telling' through maps is, in this case, the depiction of the cyclical appearance of water at different places, whose fluctuation is either captured in some way that allows enough sense to be made to guide action, or else not. Similarly, the creation of maps for development projects can be seen more as instrumental mapping than perfectionist map-making. This suggests asking what the 'story' is, who is telling it in which way, and how this relates to predictability of events in timespace.[34] A possible way to look at these 'fictions' and 'by-products of stories' is thus to regard them as strategic essentialism,[35] whose rationale and context have to be understood.

What is evident here is the strategic production of visibility, connected to the emergence of a social site. But the production of *in*visibility is also an intrinsic part of such an emergence. Trevor Pinch, for instance, made a point about infrastructure: that it becomes only 'visible' when humans make it an issue, during creation, or maintenance, or, more generally, within the framework of "the mundane politics of infrastructure" (Pinch 2010: 87). Without engaging here in what Susan Leigh Star called "ethnography of infrastructure" (Star 1999), it is nevertheless important to be reminded that the understanding of infrastructure as "part of the background for other kinds of work" (Star 1999: 380) tends to veil that "[o]ne person's infrastructure is another's topic, or difficulty" (Star 1999: 380).

Infrastructure, by definition 'underlying' other things, consists of technologies supposed to unobtrusively perform some function or task 'in the background', or 'underground'. However, like all technologies, it has inscribed demands of usage and maintenance, which can be misread or re-read. Madeleine Akrich proposed de-scripting such technologies, for instance, to capture the implications of so-called technology transfers to less-developed countries (Akrich 1992), or, in other words, to "follow the device as it moves into countries that are culturally or historically distant from its place of origin" (Akrich 1992: 211). What happens in such cases is "the creation and extension of networks that simultaneously define both the social and the technical" (Akrich 1992: 213), as soon as users relate to devices. As devices are designed with an intention to relate users and devices in a specific way, the 'script' of the technology is intended to structurally restrict this interaction. In the case of a successful "stabilization", as Akrich calls it, the technology becomes "black boxed" and invisible, and neither the designer nor the user then needs to explicitly mediate between technology and user (Akrich 1992: 211).

On the other hand, such a stabilization may never occur, with the result that the technology remains constantly visible, a continuous renegotiation of the process of a technology irritating its users. Nevertheless, the concept of technology's 'domestication' may serve as a caveat against underestimating the creative, problem-solving process of usage, which "may change the form and practical and symbolic functions of artifacts" (Oudshoorn & Pinch 2008: 553). An important part of such a process is the placing of "attention on the ways in which technological objects are used and incorporated into the routines of daily life" (Oudshoorn & Pinch 2008: 553). The challenge is thus to understate neither the normativity implied in the creation and usage of technologies, nor the conditions of possibility of users' creative re-definition of inscribed intentions.

A wider definition of 'technology' helps to relate this also to the basic problems of development projects' epistemologies. 'Technology' is defined here as a set of procedures that enables or supports directed actions to produce a specific outcome. This includes

epistemological technologies, which are supposed to translate 'reality' into manageable representations. If one presumes that projects are always built around explicit purposes, often described as 'objectives', the translation of the supposed core of a project into linguistically bounded objectives is thus based on another translation that provides the sense of showing objective reality, an ontological stage on which the project will be performed.

There are established technologies, formats and genres for translating this fundamental reality into written artefacts, such as surveys and reports. This process of translation was a subject of Richard Rottenburg's argument about the creation of *metacodes* (Rottenburg 2009). The part of his argument that is relevant to the perspective developed here concerns the process that establishes a site of intervention in a way that is translatable to the communication processes at the managerial centre of a development project, which Rottenburg calls the "center of calculation", an "institution that collects *far-fetched facts*" (Rottenburg 2009: 87, following Latour 1987).

Rottenburg's argument contemplates the astonishing paradox of an organizational field – development cooperation – that shows in its results "that social development does not follow predictable rules and hence cannot be established according to a plan" (Rottenburg 2009: 178), but nevertheless continues to operate "according to a *technical game* oriented around the central dichotomy of effective-ineffective" (Rottenburg 2009: 177). A proposed explanation for such an apparent paradox is that the operation of a heterogeneous field such as development cooperation requires the adoption of some kind of communicable consensual representation of reality in order that explicit directions of collective action can be formulated.[36]

This attempt at communicable consensus can be illustrated using several conceptual metaphors, such as metacode (Rottenburg 2009: 180), reciprocity of perspectives (Rottenburg 2009: 193), pidgin trade language (Rottenburg 2009: 194), etc. The core situation remains that "[d]evelopment cooperation occurs in a global arena in which players seek to cooperate under conditions of *heterogeneity*" (Rottenburg 2009: 191). The basic caveat of the underlying argument is that there lies a powerful tendency in the technical game and its language to overlook what invisibilities, and thereby inequalities, they both create *and* are created by.

Together with the other critical lines of thinking sketched here, this caveat leads the subsequent perspectives. The analyses under the title 'representation' combine both my own propositions as to how to represent sites of development intervention *and* observations of the epistemological technologies of those involved in such sites.

## 1C: Anticipation

‘Development’ is conceptualized here as perceptible change of a current situation toward a situation that increasingly resembles a desirable, projected ‘future’.[37] This concept touches one of the basic sources of heterogeneity in development cooperation, namely the question of what is regarded as more desirable, as better than what is. This heterogeneity not only manifests in differences between principles of organization and ideas of how society should be, how social co-existence should be organized, how valued goods should be distributed, etc.; but is also expressed in differences between individual and group, between fuzzy ideas and objectives, and in the emotions and instincts of need and desire, among others.

Although I concentrate, within the framework of this thesis, on what is brought explicitly into the social site of development projects to foster cooperation, this also indicates who and what may be implicitly excluded from the site of such cooperation. The perspective of ‘projection’ is a first step to problematize this exclusion.

Projections, in the sense employed here, are attempts to anticipate the future. In demographics, for instance, prospective population numbers are derived from existing statistics by a projection into a ‘future’; projections in economics use aggregate data to construct a possible ‘future’ based on different scenarios, each in turn based on different expectations of changes. The semantic core of these projections could be described as ‘flattening of complexity through fragmentation followed by aggregation to make it representable’ - analysis, synthesis, and presentation. Projections are thus the claimed reduction of the degree of uncertainty about the future, the transformation of the unknown into an expression of measurable risks for managerial purposes. In order words, these projections carry an intellectual assessment of the present toward a potential ‘future’, thereby making the comprehensibility and visibility of the future their purpose.

However, projections are not only connected with exploring available options for action and attempting to support decisions to be taken. In the projected ‘future’, supposedly (according to the projection’s self-ascribed purpose) significant aspects of the current situation are highlighted and implicitly set above other, less significant aspects. Furthermore, the necessarily fragmented bases of projections touch what Nelson Goodman formulated as a general problem of projection, namely the “problem of defining a certain relationship between evidence or base cases on the one hand, and hypotheses, predictions or projections on the other” (Goodman 1954/1983: 84).[38] A visual equivalent, for instance, would be drawing a line between singular statistical data in a coordinate system, as if all intermediate values existed – the actually discrete, momentary, or ‘dotted’ character of one’s observations is dissolved, in order to picture correlations and continuous developments.[39]

One research question that can be formulated based on these conceptual considerations is: What kinds of actions are performed in the field of development cooperation with the intention of creating or increasing the predictability of future events and processes?
In this sense, projections combine epistemological practices – to know what is –with the search for, and claim of, anticipatory knowledge – to know what (potentially) will be. The relevance of such a perspective can be seen in the communication of lack, which relates a perceived need to resources able to cover that need, and – in an ideal case – also initiates the appropriate processes to create a connection between both.
Let me take as an example the supply of food and water. Food and water for the human body need to be balanced in both quantity and quality. But the differences between individual human bodies leave a degree of uncertainty as to what, exactly, 'balanced' is. What seems to be at stake is the relation between need and supply, and whatever actions bring both together. From a technical point of view, the task at hand is thus assessment, production and distribution, and how to organize them. This appears as a managerial problem: Needs are simply the result of perceived discrepancies between 'should-be' and 'is', which invite actions to 'improve' the situation: to minimize these discrepancies.
While this *can* be understood as a technical process (the balancing of need and supply), it is just as much connected with a political process (prioritization): How to make sufficient food and water available for an individual human body as well as for larger groups is connected to the differentiation of *how much* and *what kind* of food and water suffices *for whom*; in other words, to contested issues of prioritizing consumers. This process of differentiation marks the point at which projections become more than mere exercises in prediction.
To summarize the argument: Development interventions relate basically to three questions:

1. What has to be changed?
2. What would be better?
3. How can the latter be achieved?

Since each intervention constitutes an effort, which must be legitimized, this also implies an answer to the question of what happens if no intervention takes place. An anticipatory technology employed to answer the latter question is that of projection. In the perspective developed here, projections are seen as technology to (try to) anticipate future events; to forecast, to predict. These projections come together in development discourses with both implicit and explicit normative judgments of the relative merits of both the current situation ('what is') and projected, desirable situations ('what should be').
Projections are examined here to indicate the intrinsic link between a political aspect ('what aspects of the 'future' are chosen to view?') and a technical one ('how are those aspects of

the ‘future’ viewed?’). This link is a practical and inevitable one: In a heterogeneous arena, it shows not only the empowered technologies of anticipation, but also on which explicit versions of ‘future’ development cooperation may be based, each with its own implicit invisibilities, contestations, contradictions, etc. In the following case studies, this thought process is formed into short analyses of the developmental concepts of food security, safe water, sustainable growth, and evidence-based development in their relation to projections concerning South Kordofan.

## 1D: Teleology

Planning, as a teleological technology, presumes that the future can be transformed through intentional intervention. Development planning, by extension, presumes that development can be achieved as the intended consequence of purposive social actions.[40] The attempt to turn ideas into actions, in this case to translate 'projected development' into social action, calls for organization. What is crucial in the following is this process of translation of a directional thought – a developmental idea of a desirable future – into organizational directives.

This starts with the assumption that the present field of development cooperation operates under the hegemony of managerial thinking;[41] the projectile language of development planning speaks much of its background in strategic management.[42] An observable change in post-1989 development discourses is the increasing deprecation of *central, governmental* planning[43], but also a stress on the central role of *strategic* planning in (large-scale) *management*.[44] In the end, the emphasis shifted not away from planning altogether, but rather differed in who is doing the planning for whom, and how that planning is done.

John Martinussen distinguished the different directions by the terms "imperative planning" and "indicative planning" (Martinussen 1997: 227) with state-managed development as a focal point. The continued practice of creating five-year plans with a focus on macro-economic models, according to Martinussen, was due to there being "no obvious alternatives to the models used in economic planning" (Martinussen 1997: 231). However, the obvious shortcomings of planning schemes led to debates in which it was "stressed that planning is a complex and multifaceted social process, in which the actual preparation of the five-year plans is reduced to a single stage among many" (Martinussen 1997: 231).

To clarify my perspective on planning, I want to think through three lines of approach, viewing plans:

1. as instruments of control and directive coordination;
2. as artefacts of communication in organizations;
3. as objects of negotiation of power in the creation and use of the former two.

1. A strong line in organization studies has been established around the observation that "[i]n most organizations the goals toward which participants direct their behavior are different from the goals that motivate them to participate in the organization" (Scott 1981/1987: 269). This line establishes planning in the framework of "integration of behavior" (Simon 1945/1976: 96), based on decisions and choices made towards attaining objectives. There is thus a potential conflict between individuals and organizations concerning different objectives,

which calls for management to secure the continued survival and performance of organizations. In this sense, plans are instruments of, or at least experiments in, control.

Peter M. Blau and W. Richard Scott discussed “central planning” as one of the possible concepts of managerial control, whose focus is “the coordination of operations through advance planning of the work program” (Blau & Scott 1963: 167). This focus is built on the assumption that management can pre-define the structures of operations, pre-creating a flow of actions by a set of interrelated directives; in other words, create a ‘real plan’. Blau and Scott highlighted the difference of this “assembly-line” procedure – the structure of the workplace directs the actions of the workers – from “job-lot” procedure – the actions of the workers are constantly directed through a hierarchy of directives (Blau & Scott 1963: 167).

Planning is in this case the anticipation of the means of deployment of human and other resources in order to achieve a predefined goal. This concept is connected with many assumptions concerning both the power of top-down management and human behaviour.[45] It assumes also that plans are created within, and are addressed to, a more or less closed system. The following two perspectives question these assumptions.

2. A different way to describe plans is to look at them as artefacts. Strategic plans in particular can be seen to picture “an organization as an actor with clear goals and with the capacity to achieve those goals” (Hokyu & Suarez 2005: 73). But even operational plans do not, according to Karl E. Weick, fulfil the function assumed by the concept of “central planning”. He argues “that plans are symbols, advertisements, games, and excuses for interactions” (Weick 1969/1979: 10). Plans signal efforts to be undertaken in the face of doubt about the organization’s performance; “they negotiate a portion of the reality that then comes back and rearranges the organization” (Weick 1969/1979: 10). In this sense, plans try to establish a perception *about* the organization. But they can also be used to examine such a perception “because they are often to test how serious people are about the programs they advocate” as whoever proposes a programme “should be willing to spend the effort necessary to justify the program and to embed it in a plan” (Weick 1969/1979: 10-11). But as artefacts to be created and interpreted, plans also “induce conversations among diverse populations”, which may have positive, albeit mostly unplanned consequences (Weick 1969/1979: 11).

For what follows, it has to be noted that Weick operates also with what he calls “’real’ plans, those that bid the energies and time of people” (Weick 1969/1979: 10). This ‘bidding’ has its limits, too, and, in an advisory turn of his argumentation, Weick warns that “[i]f administrators are overconscientious about trying to plan rationally for the future, they may produce a plan that artificially simplifies the complexity involved and unnecessarily admonishes people to work toward goal consensus and consensus on values”. Even more, he adds, “[a]ttemps to

make a structure ‘understandable’ to everyone could lead managers to introduce excessive simplification and limited linkages among people” (Weick 1969/1979: 103).

This leads to the recognition of a more complex aspect of plans, namely the principal-agent problem.[46] In a simplified form, this problem concerns the inevitable distance between different levels of an organization. Somebody giving somebody else a task will not necessarily stay in the location where the task is done, as delegation is a way of freeing oneself from a task. This freedom does not, of course, include freedom from the responsibility to perform, which means that either trust, or control, or something between the two, must bridge the gap between the principal’s being here and the agent’s being there.

The necessity of thinning the upward flow of information then arises, as many accounts of different operations come together on the principal’s desk, who cannot work with the same complexity of information about each single operation in this multitude. The ‘reality’ of each operation has thus to be communicated in an aggregated way, which creates another gap; again, something between trust and control must provide a bridge.

Plans can be regarded, then, as attempts to create such an ‘infrastructure’ between principals and agents; a template of control, so to speak. However, this perspective still operates with the presumption that an organization exists as an entity and that plans are (multi-functional) expressions of top-down managerial activities within this organization. The first presumption will be discussed in the next chapter; let me concentrate here on the second presumption.

The principal-agent problem already points to ambiguities in the power structure of this arrangement, as ‘aggregation’ means also the creation of invisibilities, which can be a powerful act. What if the basic direction of a plan – somebody plans for somebody – is also questioned regarding the embedded power structures - in other words, the politics of planning?

3. A possible approach would be to point out the inherent inequalities created through planning. The politics of planning include what has been referred to as ‘the dark side of planning’ (Allmendinger & Gunder 2005): the suppression of interests and participation of some on behalf of some others; abysses of planned destruction; social exclusion as an intended or unintended consequence of spatial planning; etc. Disparities existing in any representation of the many by the few can be seen in planners’ claims to have superior abilities to construct a line of actions leading to identified objectives. Inequality existing in any social formation can often be found hiding behind the claimed ‘objectivity’ and well-meaning character suggested by the rational form of planning’s artefacts.

However, this leads to yet another top-bottom dichotomy that tends to translate social interactions into stiff binary categories. There are further questions that must be addressed in

valuing “the nuances and shades of everyday planning” (Hillier 2002: 17): What *kind* of destruction?, What *kind* of exclusion?, What *kind* of inequality?[47]

Considering these aspects for development projects, another question appears: On the one hand, these projects are supposed to be the result of defined objectives and organizational consequences drawn from these objectives. On the other hand, these objectives are supposed to be in the interest of those for whom – and, ideally, with whom – these projects are undertaken. What kinds of communities or groups are thus engaged in these activities? Who is defining whose interests?

These questions lead me to discourses surrounding the term ‘participation’. In most cases, these discourses relate to “a recognition of the solidly substantiated fact that the development process does not automatically distribute the benefits *according to need*, merit or effort” (Martinussen 1997: 236; emphasis by author), but that this process is *related to the power* to control distribution. A subsequent change from a top-down to a bottom-up perspective assigns the strife for equity to the self-organization of interest groups (Martinussen 1997: 236).

This confronts us with a puzzling question: How can such interest groups, presuming they exist, acquire the skills to organize themselves, when the exclusion from skill development is the main reason for those groups to be formed? And by extension: How can the inequalities that caused their strife in the first place be reduced or even eradicated by development projects? Development projects, so it seems, are hybrids of managed, temporally limited units with objectives supposedly based on shared interests. However, a basic question of participation remains: who defines the conditions of participation, and thus the organizational frontiers?

One of the ways to address this issue is a recent increase in project management models that include the participation of ‘beneficiaries’ in the planning.[48] A subsequent fundamental paradox seems to emerge when the definition of beneficiaries, and the development of their abilities to create and implement plans become explicit objectives of the development intervention: The teleological character of development projects points always back to the defining reasons for their existence. In the development plans, this reason is explicit and formulated into objectives, which display the claim that the project has an axis holding it together, a visualization of its claim to exist.

A complete analysis of projects would therefore have to scrutinize the creation of such artefacts. However, the intention here is to use this perspective as a means of examining inequalities travelling with the created artefacts, which often remain the only accessible manifestation of the process. Instead of trying to deconstruct a process from such artefacts,

the perspective proposed here looks at the realities drawn by such teleological documents, realities that are displayed as possible bases for collective action in projects.

It is the temporal concentration of ideas that counts here, the intellectual process of contraction, of drawing things together, of levelling out uncertainties into a plan, surrounded by its inevitable dispersal into more or less 'messy' practices. The analysis thus deals with a situation of documentation and communication which has only limited stabilized, long-term accessible nodes, all of which refer in some way to plans, be they reports, or brochures, or interviews: The plan is sought in order to be enacted, although, so it seems, everything else except the plan is enacted. The plan promises to describe a clear line between now and then, between here and there, but it is in fact a symbol of unfulfilled prophesies, an ephemeral mandala of intentions: carefully and expensively brought together, beautiful and admired for its clarity of structures, yet easily lost on the wind.

It may be that the fragility of the selected development projects themselves makes the analyzed plans so fragile, in which case their fragility is little more than the result of self-fulfilling prophecy or circular argument. Even more, it seems self-evident to (almost) anybody that no plan will necessarily work out exactly according to its own predictions.

But this 'circular argument' allows two things: First, bringing to light the essential fragility of these plans also highlights which externalities make them fragile. This course leads beyond the self-referential reality presented by the plan and touches on many uncertainties that characterize the social worlds these plans are intended for *and* the social worlds these plans come from. Second, a field as dominated by planning activities as asymmetrical development – somebody develops somebody else – can probably not be understood when manifestations of such activities are kept outside the focal centre of analysis.[49]

In the following, governmental and INGO plans are thus discussed as attempts to organize development, or to support at least the perception that such attempts are made. This leaves open, however, the question of what happens when the organizational framework for the implementation of these plans – in this case projects – still needs to emerge.

## 1E: Praxeology

Project management has been described as dealing with basically two problems, namely cooperation and coordination (Söderlund 2011: 46). Both are marked by the specific teleological character of projects: "[P]rojects are created, shaped, and designed to die. They differ considerably from convential ideas about organizations as following the principle of 'going concern'." (Söderlund 2011: 54).[50]

In other words, projects emerge from short-term cooperation and depend on the definition of a temporarily shared interest, whose pursuit must both result from *and* simultaneously create the conditions for the coordination of collective action. Several models have been developed to analytically deal with these basic conditions of projects, differing in the stress they place on application or analysis. A common feature of these approaches, however, is to look at projects as emerging organizations (Morris et. al. 2011: 2).

An operational view on projects is, for instance, provided by concepts of so-called Project Cycle Management (PCM). In the guidelines of major European development organizations, projects are depicted as additional, positive input to an ongoing situation. A diagram of the German GTZ, for example, shows a large arrow representing the "self-help process" of the target group, while another arrow, representing a project or programme, enters the picture, supported (or pushed?) by "technical cooperation", and merges with the self-help process in direction of the development goal (GTZ 1996: 2).

EU guidelines noted that the project-based approach has been "at 'the cutting edge of development' for many years, primarily because it has helped meet the accountability requirements of donors" (EU 2004: 9). A critical perspective emerged, however, which questioned issues such as the idea of 'local ownership'; the duplication of management structures by overlapping, but independent projects; the undermining of 'local' structures and skills by an 'external' labour force; and 'fungibility': the government's reduction of financial means supposed to fund the public services the project is providing (EU 2004: 9-10). The avoidance of fragmentation of interventions is here addressed by attempting 'policy change', which points at the change of underlying structures rather then at specific products or material transfer.[51]

This leads me to examine the structural context of such projects. One of the dominant models of objective-oriented planning in development discourses, the Logical Framework Approach (LFA), operates with the category 'assumptions' which refers to those parameters that "describe conditions that must exist if the project is to succeed but which are outside the direct control of the project management" (NORAD 1999: 48). This is a managerial way of 'bringing in the context'. What was intended as a tool used to filter projects that are more