

Positionality and Reflexivity in Sensitive Contexts

Case studies from Nigeria

Dr. Elodie Apard

IRD Researcher
elodie.apard@ird.fr

Reflexivity:

- Questioning and challenging one's own thoughts and beliefs.
- Reflexive effort = taking into consideration our personal views opinions and biases.

Positionality:

- Understanding of ourselves, who we are, what we bring to our research and how our identity may shape our work.
- Depends on social status, gender, race...

Positionality and Reflexivity are relevant tools for:

- Critical analysis of power relations
- Decolonization of research

Collective reflections on positionality

Questioning, individually and collectively:

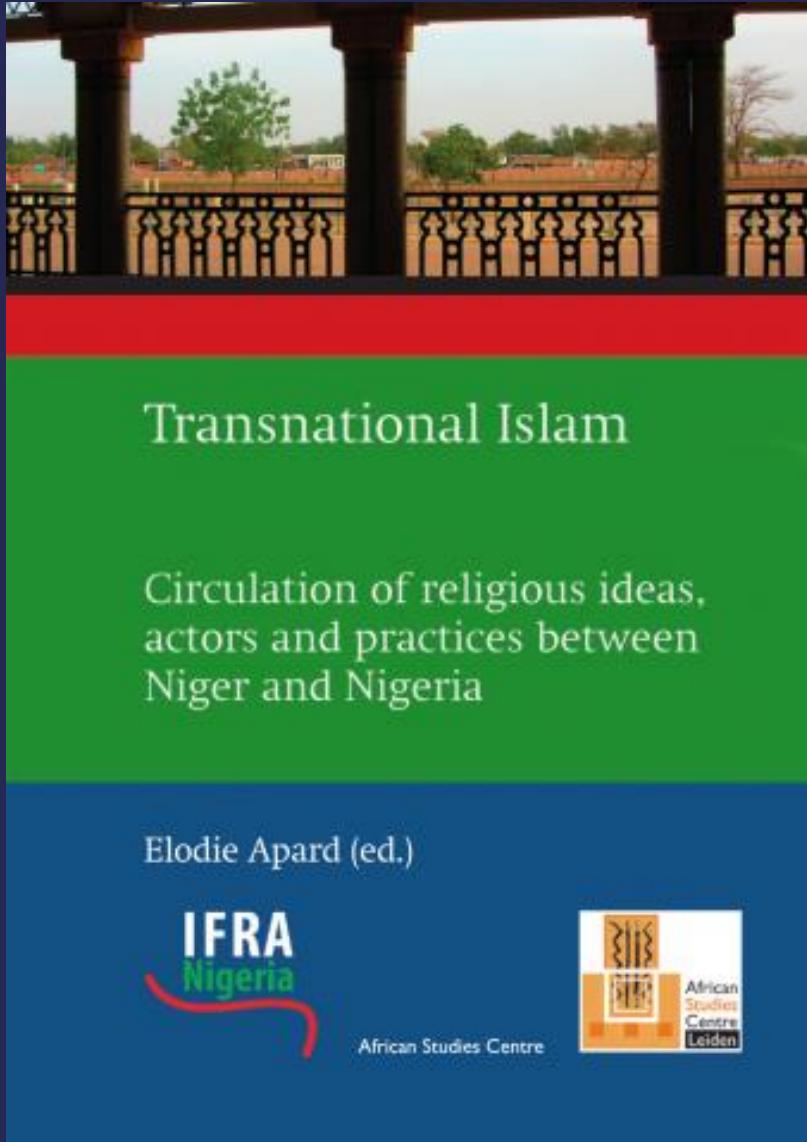
- our image, self-perception, social status, gender...
- how our presence is understood in the field and what it triggers.
- our place in the power relations at work within Academia

Studying religious movements from a crossborder perspective

*Trans-Islam project:
Transborder religious dynamics
religieuses between Niger and
Nigéria*

Team of 7 researchers
*Niger, Nigeria, UK
and France*





Apard E. (ed.), *Transnational Islam. Circulation of religious Ideas, Actors and Practices between Niger and Nigeria*, Ibadan/Leiden, IFRA-Nigeria/Africa Studies Centre, 2020, 218 p.



The Bukavu Series

Toward a Decolonisation of Research

Edited by Aymar Nyenyezi, An Ansoms, Koen Vlassenroot,
Emery Mudingga, Godefroid Muzalia

Illustrations by Tembo Kash

Translated from the French by
Sara Weschler and Mary Lou Bradley

PUL PRESSES
UNIVERSITAIRES
■ DE LOUVAIN

The Bukavu Series, 2020







Call for Application – Masterclass: "Challenges of Fieldwork: Data Collection in Sensitive Situations" – 13–19 September 2021



The programme Hidden Narratives on Transnational Organised Crime in West Africa is proposing a Masterclass on the theme: "Challenges of Fieldwork: Data Collection in Sensitive Situations". The masterclass will take place at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan from September 13th to 19th 2021.

Training

Training

Workshops

Masterclasses

Seminars

Academic Events

Janet Ogundairo

PhD Candidate, University of Ibadan

TNOC Masterclass participant

"White Man has come, Money has come": Personal Reflections of a Research Assistant Working in Rural Communities in Southwestern Nigeria

Foreign researchers, including white ones, are not uncommon to see in my home country, Nigeria. However due to factors of unfamiliarity with the study area and language barrier, amongst others, they often need the assistance of locals who serve as guides and translators, and in many cases they usually use graduate students. It was in this capacity of a translator that I was once engaged by a researcher who was looking at the political economy of some World Bank projects in selected states in Southwestern Nigeria. My role was to serve as translator between the researcher and stakeholders including kings, chiefs, youth leaders, market leaders and traders in communities we were meant to visit within three days. The team comprised a white European researcher, a Nigerian research assistant (me) and government officials from the two states visited. These state officials served as liaison persons with the communities, and they facilitated our meetings with stakeholders. A driver, hired by the consultant, also joined us on one of the days.

Due to some reasons, I was excited and looked forward to the fieldwork. That was my first experience of working directly with an European researcher on a field. Although prior to this I had had some experiences working with foreign researchers, it was as a part of a methodological training class. This time, I believed working as a RA for this very researcher would be knowledge producing because he is an established researcher and, as a bonus, he is working among the same population (the Fulani) that I was studying for my PhD. I am also an adventurous person who loves visiting new places, irrespective of the geographical location. I never envisaged any negative experience, save for the poor access to roads and the manifest poor standard of living of the rural dwellers, a situation that is exacerbated by their exclusion by the political leaders. I am also Yoruba and working in Yoruba communities is a walk over for me.

We visited different markets in the local government areas selected for the World Bank projects. Fortunately, my study location is located in one of the local government areas penciled earmarked by the public officials prior to the field work. The researcher, because we have same area of interest, also visited my study site to see one of my key informants. In this paper, I reflect on the experiences I had in all these places that we visited.

Members of the communities that we visited had interesting perception, expectations and opinions of me as a Nigerian working with a foreign researcher. Many of them saw me as influential and well-connected. I deduced this from the type of questions they asked me. They were curious to know how and where I met a "white man". They wondered if I was working with the World Bank.

Reversed fieldwork and ubiquity of research

- *ex situ* approach: desk-based research, mostly conducted by academics working remotely
- *in situ* approach: collection of empirical data on the ground

Studying Human trafficking for sexual exploitation from Nigeria to Europe

PACKING project:
Team of 7 researchers
Nigeria, Italy and France

Collective Report, Ecpat France, 180 p

RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND CRIMINAL GROUPS IN TRAFFICKING OF NIGERIAN GIRLS AND WOMEN

The case of shrines, "Ladies'club"
and "cultist groups"



[Home](#) / [Former Projects](#) / [Packing](#)

PACKING: Protection of migrants and Asylum seekers especially Children and women coming from Nigeria and victims of trafficKING.

Discover the project

The general objective of the project is that rights of migrants are promoted and respected and migrants are protected from trafficking in human beings. The specific objective aims at preventing and eradicating human rights violations against migrants and asylum seekers, especially children and women coming from Nigeria, and at risk of victims of trafficking in human beings. The project aims at supporting the implementation of the Palerme protocol (2000) and led by the French NGO ECPAT France.

The vulnerability of prospective victims is commonly due to prevalent poverty, high rate of unemployment, cultural norms that deprive children and girls a say in decision affecting them and ignorance. As a result, victims are easily deceived by agents who go around convincing girls and parents about the huge prospects of making it abroad. NGOs and journalists are reporting the increasing number of children (girls) and women migrating from Nigeria to Europe and coming from rural areas of Nigeria. They arrive in Italy by boat after a long trip through Nigeria, Niger and Libya. They report the trauma of witnessing the death of travel mates. When they arrive, most of them, are already victims of a criminal network who will sexually exploit them in Europe and use elaborated coercive strategies to keep them under exploitation. Reality begins to dawn on the girls when they are being subjected to forced rituals and oaths.

Research Projects

Former Projects

- [Hidden Narratives on TNOC](#)
- [Assessment of Risks in the Niger Republic and on the Niger-Nigeria border](#)
- [Dynamics of Islam in Nigeria in a transnational perspective](#)
- [Globafrica](#)
- [Habitele: wearable digital identities](#)
- [Health Systems in History](#)
- [History of Medical Research in Nigeria](#)
- [Human Trafficking](#)
- [Independance in Nigeria experienced at grass-roots level](#)
- [Languages in Nigeria: Identities, dynamics and didactics - Naija Project](#)
- [Languages in Nigeria: Identities,](#)