A new project, Borderland Dynamics in East Africa, seeks to strengthen capacities within research and teaching at the departments of anthropology at Addis Ababa University, University of Khartoum and Makerere University. The long term goal is to develop new knowledge and to empower borderland communities in Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda to voice special concerns in policy dialogues. However, modern anthropology arrived in the Middle East under an older model of area studies with a different agenda and reference group, not on the coattails of power but of archaeology, which provided inter alia legitimacy, local contacts and connections, and often actual bases for fieldwork, which is the profession’s other bracket.