

Programm Point Sud 2019

Dynamics of Everyday Life within Municipal Administrations in Francophone and Anglophone Africa

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**Faculté des Sciences et Technologies de l'Education et de la
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Report



**Faculté des Sciences et Technologies
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FASTEF**



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Dynamics of Everyday Life within Municipal Administrations in Francophone and Anglophone Africa

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Themes and Objectives

Currently, municipal administrations in sub-Saharan Africa are official focus for ‘good governance’ projects that aim to fight corruption, build responsive institutions and hold officials to account. International support target municipal elections, results-for-aid interventions and currently, municipal bonds for infrastructural projects. Still, we know very little about the everyday life of municipal administrations. At best, extant studies focus on actors inside central state bureaucracies. Everyday life with regard to the relationship between administration and citizens is largely taken for granted. We miss knowledge on how municipalities work in relation to their particular local contexts. The contexts may include service provision, impact of decentralized institutions on local communities and on local power structures. The aim of this workshop was not only to point out the view from actors inside local bureaucracies but also those who are outside and on the interface between bureaucracies and other local ‘authorities’ on the margins of local public authority. These include, among others chiefs, honorary councillors, faith-based groups, youth groups, and local entrepreneurs. Inspired by the notion of everyday bureaucratization, we were interested in how ordinary citizens appropriate this interface and bureaucratic techniques of the state to organize, adapt and challenge the daily practices of municipal bureaucracies.

Against this backdrop, questions such as everyday meanings of local councils, the interaction and tensions between municipal officials and residents, emolument of councillors, social pressure and demands for accountability were among the different themes of particular interest to us. Thus, the workshop shed light on practical ways in which municipal administrations do their work and how they are, in turn, influenced by their constituencies. To understand these everyday dynamics in and outside of municipal councils, our four-day workshop focused on empirical and conceptual contributions on the following four topics:

- i. Municipal officials and residents frequently tussle over the crucial question of land tenure and land title registration. How are grandiose and gentrification projects pursued? How are emergent tensions from resettlement projects managed?
- ii. Municipal representations in the different political cultures take varied forms. The key question is: what conditions of work are available to councillors and how do these affect councillors’ dialogue with their council ward residents?
- iii. How do local authorities (e.g. chiefs, elders) relate to municipal administrations especially regarding local narratives vis-à-vis ‘modern’ notions of decentralized authority and control? These relationships shape the perceptions and control over local executive power, local taxation systems and delivery of local services.
- iv. Municipalities and everyday corruption are central themes in current development debates. What forms do demands for accountability and responsiveness take? What strategic manoeuvres do municipal officials employ to deal with these demands?

We set out to use these thematic areas as laboratory to test new ideas, develop a follow up workshop and probable publication project on key topic regarding municipal administrations.

Methodology and Results

The workshop was held for four days at the FASTEF. Our local cooperating institute: the DHIP-CREPOS was involved right from the onset as their research programme fruitfully framed the keynote for the meeting. Therefore, the introductory and keynote session was held at the premises of DHIP-CREPOS. The keynote speech was given by Prof Katja Werthmann, University of Leipzig. The topic of the presentation: ‘Observation on decentralization in Cameroon and Burkina Faso’ was particularly linked to the agenda for the conference. Dr. Susann Baller, DHIP moderated the keynote session. The workshop was uniquely challenging right from the onset. It brought over 20 early career academics (doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers) in dialogue with established scholars as well as with practitioners and civil society activists from 10 different national (African and European) contexts. The presentations and discussions took place in English and French supported by short summaries in the other language respectively. In spite of the challenge, this dialogue on the topic of public action and interfaces around municipal administrations was successfully delivered. There were six thematic sessions/panels for the workshop that were delivered as follows.

The first session focused on ‘municipalities: meanings and contestations. The presentations (Bob-Milliar/Cissé/Mela) the unearthed multiple and conflicting meanings that emerge with regard to municipalities and their functions as well as how local people think of these institutions. Municipalities’ colonial and post-colonial attributes including appropriation of space; and as a brute force that restricts individual and collective liberties were particularly mentioned. The session discussants (Benga/Osei) pointed out how the political science literature mostly disregards African political systems and how they operate on a daily basis. This neglect partly explains why these institutions are often described as weak systems. In practice, local political institutions blend local/ neo-traditional and formal rules. In that sense, the local context is crucial. One presentation precisely put it that Ghana’s political parties are embedded in the local political culture, and is very close to a patronage system but also offers a practical perspective for local political action. The open discussion drew striking parallels between municipal administrations and a ‘command state’ by Georg Elwert¹; a reference to a top-down structure in which no local decision is made without reference to a higher authority. In some of the local administrations, this practice was vivid in spite of the new rules created by decentralization programmes. Unsurprisingly, Cameroonian and Togolese systems stood given that their local administrations operate in authoritarian contexts.

The second session brought together practitioners from inside municipal administrations with civil society activists, who frequently tussle with municipal administrations over programmes (Jouga/Agyei/Koné/Diouf). This was not only energized and interesting; it also became evident that the two groups differed in their approaches to pursuing local transformation.

The second day, had two sessions. The first began with the panel on ‘actors inside municipal councils’. The presentations (Mensah/Daniel/Fall) highlighted the different and sometimes opposing logics of outside actors and those inside municipal offices as they interact to undertake public action. The papers were somewhat skewed in favour of non-state actors and

1. Elwert, George (2001): “The Command State in Africa: State Deficiency, Clientelism and Power-Locked Economies”. In: W. Steffen and I. Cornelsen (Ed.), *Entwicklungspolitische Perspektiven im Kontext wachsender Komplexität. Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Dieter Weiss*. München, Bonn, London: Weltforum, 419–452.

how they confront services and obligations of local state officials. The session discussants (Werthmann/Samaké) aptly lamented how interesting and nuanced it may have been had some of the papers focused on more detailed discussions of the everyday life of elected officials (e.g. mayors and councillors). One headline in the discussion was the fact that new rules (or the absence of new rules) provide spaces for local public action especially in the relations between municipal administrations and their residents. This idea of new spaces for public action became clearer in the subsequent sections.

The second session touched on 'how social self-organizations interface with municipal administrations. The empirical papers (Lar/Diallo/Ndikubwimana/Ndiaye) pointed out the indispensable roles of neo-traditional actors (and their modes of organizing e.g. *imihigo/Dozo*) as they interact with state actors in delivering public authority. It was clear that these concepts/ modes of action are used to claim legitimacy for new institutions. Still, they complemented each other in the delivery public authority. The discussants (Ndiaye/Stroh-Steckelberg) pointed out whether and how such traditional models of social organization could be adapted to both urban and rural municipalities. Key among these concerns was what new thing do these models bring to the discussion on municipal administration? And whether we could draw some links between the re-emergence of pre-colonial concepts and practices in current local politics. For example, between Rwanda's *Imihigo* accountability process and the Côte d'Ivoire's *Dozos* traditional hunters system of providing local security.

Saturday marked an interesting phase with another encounter of the practitioners' forum. Our first session comprised a visit to the Municipal Council of Gorée Island, near Dakar. Participants listened to everyday programmes and services delivered by the council. In attendance were the deputy mayor, the municipal director and the cabinet director. It was remarkable that women were actively involved in local council leadership and formed about 50% of the whole municipal team. The event actually served as a channel to bring into dialogue, the academic papers presented and practical realities of delivering local services.

Back in Dakar, the second session introduced the topic of the work of municipalities and potential accountabilities mechanisms involved. Under the heading 'municipalities and social accountability' presenters (Agyei/Sanogo/Eyebiyi/Samaké) pointed out efforts and challenges to improve public perception of accountable and responsive municipal institutions. As the papers hinted, there remain at the same time, several 'grey zones' through which residents and clients pursue alternatives paths to access local services. The discussants (Olivier de Sardan/Klute) linked the presenters' perspective quite well with the general debate and critique of normative forms of accountability that rely solely on official norms vis-à-vis the multiple forms of accountability (i.e. the practical norms approach). Olivier de Sardan cited multiple demands of accountability faced by tax collectors in public markets in Niger, based on different modes of governance. He is supposed to enforce strict tax regulations that all marketers pay their tolls. However, his relatives in the market might expect tax exemption. Hence, he is not only accountable to the municipal tax office but also to his family relations.

Sunday 19 May 2019 marked the end of the workshop with two sessions. The first session concluded discussions on municipalities and accountability processes with papers on practical projects that seek to promote of social accountability in the face of broke local government in Uganda and another on municipal administration and land tenure in Bamako (Ayeko-Kümmeth/Tangara). The presenters touched on multiple formal and private demands on officials who are responsible for ensuring social accountability. The discussants (Olivier de Sardan/Klute) brought the papers together and facilitated interesting discussions. It became clear that municipal accountability mechanisms and general public participation represent 'a

paradox': more and conflicting rules allow public action outside the official channels. Klute mentioned the importance of these open moments or windows of opportunities by referring to David Graeber's work on 'the utopia of rules'.² Indeed, the different papers touched on a never-ending practice of new rules that hardly changed existing practices. He (Klute) urged that the state should be analyzed as a huge organization and the citizen as part of that organization. The local administration is often the intermediary between the local and the metropole in the practical sense. This shows the ambiguity of the administration: the many rules from the state and red tapes create confusion for bureaucrats and clients of the administration. The administration tends to hold the view that these problems could be solved by more and new rules. Essentially, new and ambiguous rules offer spaces for political action both in and outside the administration; for both bureaucrats and citizens.

The concept of travelling models becomes relevant in the analysis of relations between local actors and local administrations: the travelling ideas of decentralization and how they adapt to new contexts (what we refer in neo-institutional sociology as diffusion-decoupling and legitimacy model). But missing in the presentations, as Olivier de Sardan pointed out, were the real everyday life and practices of the travelling models. These new rules of decentralization are part of the set of global ideas that travel. Accountability is one of them and from the everyday life perspective, one could analyze how accountability adapts to local contexts. Relating accountability to the question of corruption, the example of the big traders who provide funds for local elections was cited. Their gesture makes the elected person accountable even more so to the traders vis-à-vis the general public. This is a clear situation of multiple accountability. Therefore, if one analyzes this case of clientelism with a strictly negative connotation, it assumes a normative stance since it would imply an official vision of corruption. However, these actions are all embedded in the everyday life of different local arenas that overlap in the framework of the different modes of governance (including chieftaincy mode of governance, project based mode of governance, associational mode of governance, sponsorship mode of governance, developmental mode of governance, traders mode of governance). The second and last session of the workshop was a plenary session that served as a forum for general conclusion and way forward.

The discussions were detailed and rich: everyday life in municipal administration is inevitably linked to decentralization programmes that shape actions of municipal institutions and actors, both inside and outside of local administrations. The normative idea about decentralization is the attempt to build a strong state. Its logic is to change the rules but the practical rules do not change. Thus, the result of decentralization for public action in municipalities is naïve. The main points from the papers and discussions, as we summarized, were as follows.

First, in spite of the different national contexts decentralization opens up spaces for political action (a space especially used by strong political actors). This action occurs in the local arena with state and other outside interferences (i.e. interfaces between state and non-state actors). It also opens up options for local associations and spontaneous protests and claims. However, the type of actors depend on a) distribution of power and with regard to the ordinary people; b) the degree of trust in local leaders; c) the perceived freedom of action, existing grievances, expectations with regard to possible change, and the degree to which the leader(s) channels claims into public action. Thus, impact of decentralization varies widely: context matters according to a considerable number of (so-called) factors. Second, the policy of decentralization is at least indirectly linked to the notion of 'the' local community with a

2. Graeber, David. (2015): *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House.

common will for common solutions. Nevertheless, new local political arenas open up spaces for particularism and local conflicts inside the so-called community and with regard to neighbouring communities. To understand this requires more ethnographic fieldwork.

Third, local politics is highly personalized and marked by close personal relations. Formal regulations just set the frame within which personal ambitions and obligations are negotiated. The extent to which these personalized relations play out does not follow systematic and standardized procedures. Therefore, it is not only the institutional contexts and typical actors that work in this context. Crucially, individual persons matter. Fourth, decentralisation cannot be implemented as a set programme. It may and often revitalizes political processes. It often reorganizes power relations between strong actors and opens up spaces that offer new formal framework (and sometimes even successfully supports bureaucratic modes of governance). To end on a positive note, hopefully in the long run, that may open up the chance for more democratic participation and control of power.

2.1.4 Sustainability of the Event

This workshop succeeded as a very fruitful channel for networking. Despite many new individual linkages, so far, we shared a mailing list through which some participants already intensified the exchange of ideas and expertise on their research projects. The conference already has a planned follow up event in September 2020. The conveners are preparing a panel for the conference of the African Studies Association in Germany (VAD) in Frankfurt/Main. At least three of the workshop participants will join the conveners in Frankfurt for extended discussions on the topic. A crucial enquiry from most of the participants was the next steps that follow the workshop. The clear preference for most of them was a follow-up event (e.g. writing meeting) as well as an academic output/ publication. To that end, the conveners are preparing to submit for publication, the conference report in the Africa Spectrum journal. Next, the conveners plan to apply for funding for a writing workshop. Participation will be based on a new and more focused call for papers based on a refined theme from the workshop and the (probable) panel at the VAD. The expectation is that the events would culminate into a special issue publication in a peer review journal (possibly *Politique Africaine*, *Afrique Contemporaine* or the *Canadian Journal of African studies*). Work on the publication will set the theme for our planned for a follow-up workshop (possibly in 2021).

2.1.5 Participants

1. Prof. Alfred Ndiaye, Sociology, University of Gaston Berger Saint Louis, Senegal
2. Prof. Georg Klute, Anthropology, University of Bayreuth, Germany
3. Prof. Katja Werthmann, Anthropology University of Leipzig, Germany
4. Prof. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, Anthropology, LASDEL/ Paris, France
5. Dr. Ndiouga Benga, UCAD/ CREPOS, Dakar, Senegal
6. Dr. Susann Baller, History, DHIP-CREPOS, Paris and Dakar
7. Prof. Antje Daniel, Sociology, University of Vienna, Austria
8. Prof. Alexander Stroh-Steckelberg, Political Science, University of Bayreuth, Germany
9. Dr. Anja Osei, Political Science, University of Konstanz, Germany
10. Dr. George M. Bob-Milliar, African Politics, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana
11. Dr. Jane Ayeko-Kümmeth, Political Science, GiZ Bonn Germany/ Uganda
12. Dr. Jimam T. Lar, History, University of Jos, Nigeria
13. Dr. Collins Adjei Mensah, Geography, University of Cape Coast, Ghana
14. Dr. Elieth Eyibiyi, Anthropology, DHIP-CREPOS, Dakar, Senegal
15. Anthony A. Agyei, Practitioner, Budget Analyst, Tema Metropolitan Assembly, Tema, Ghana

16. John-Baptist Ndikubwimana, PhD candidate, Public Administration, University of Rwanda, Rwanda
17. Dr. Farima Samaké, General medicine, IDES, Bamako, Mali
18. Dr. Aïdas Sanogo, Anthropology, DHIP-CREPOS, Basel
19. Massa Koné, Activist, UACDDDD/Civil Society Organization, Bamako, Mali
20. Drissa Tangara, PhD candidate, Sociology, IUT and Point Sud, Bamako, Mali
21. Oscarine Mela, PhD candidate, Sociology, DHIP-CREPOS and, University Yaoudé 1, Cameroon
22. Kamina Diallo, PhD candidate, Political Science, DHIP-CREPOS and Science Po, Paris, France
23. Malick Diouf, Activist, Association pour la renovation de Kathialick, Senegal
24. Modou Niang, PhD candidate, Sociology, DHIP-CREPOS and University of Gaston Berger Saint Louis, Senegal
25. Koly Fall, PhD candidate, Sociology, UCAD/ IHA-CREPOS
26. Adama Cissé, PhD candidate, UCAD-ETHOS, Dakar, Senegal
27. Modou Ndiaye, PhD candidate, ETHOS, Dakar, Senegal
28. Annie Jouga, Deputy Mayor Gorée/Dakar, Senegal

Some scheduled participants had to regrettably cancel their participation in the very last moments of the conference/workshop. Prof. Babacar fall and Shilla Memusi, had urgent engagements that made it impossible for them to be in Dakar. Ndiague Faye, Aissatou Seck and Modou Niang could not attend because of conflicting academic schedules. On the other hand, their absence benefitted our open discussions given that the workshop programme was already loaded.

