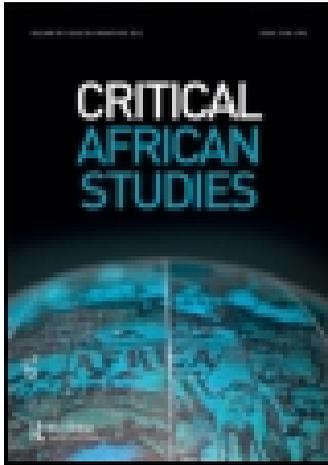


This article was downloaded by: [Ngala Chome]

On: 28 August 2015, At: 23:15

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London, SW1P 1WG



Critical African Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcaf20>

'Devolution is only for development'? Decentralization and elite vulnerability on the Kenyan coast

Ngala Chome^a

^a Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, Nairobi, Kenya

Published online: 27 Aug 2015.



CrossMark

[Click for updates](#)

To cite this article: Ngala Chome (2015): 'Devolution is only for development'?
Decentralization and elite vulnerability on the Kenyan coast, Critical African Studies, DOI:
[10.1080/21681392.2015.1075750](https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2015.1075750)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2015.1075750>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &

Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

‘Devolution is only for development’? Decentralization and elite vulnerability on the Kenyan coast

‘La Dévolution n’est que pour le Développement’? La Décentralisation et la vulnérabilité des élites sur la côte kenyane

Ngala Chome*

Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, Nairobi, Kenya

(Received 20 October 2014; final version received 28 April 2015)

On the Kenya coast, it was widely hoped that devolution would address strict political functions – historical injustices and communal narratives of marginalization. However, newly elected county governors are finding themselves constrained in addressing this role due to ongoing operational logics of local governance and the limitation of the role of county governors by the central government to ‘less political’ and ‘quieter’ functions of development. Based on field interviews, official reports, newspaper sources, and electoral data, this article advances a series of interrelated arguments. Firstly, to avoid political contestation from below, the central government frames devolution in technocratic (as opposed to political) terms of development. Secondly, county governments contest official de-politicization due to ongoing logics of patronage politics – where local county leaders have to show that they are able to protect local interests in terms of both immediate assistance and communal narratives of injustice. Thirdly – related to preceding arguments – county governors and executives find themselves vulnerable within incompatible expectations, differing from common analyses of decentralization across Africa that emphasize on ‘elite capture’ or re-centralization.

Keywords: de-centralization; devolution; de-politicization; local elites; elite vulnerability; Kenya coast

Sur la côte kenyane, l’espoir général était que la dévolution s’adresserait à des fonctions politiques précises: injustices historiques et récits collectifs de marginalisation. Cependant, les gouverneurs du comté nouvellement élus se retrouvent contraints dans leur capacité à aborder ce rôle à cause de constantes logiques opérationnelles de gouvernance locale, et de la restriction par le gouvernement central du rôle des gouverneurs de comté à des fonctions de développement « moins politiques » et « plus discrètes ». Cet article, basé sur des entretiens sur le terrain, rapports officiels, sources journalistiques et données électorales, présente une série d’arguments interdépendants. Premièrement, pour éviter toute contestation politique de la base, le gouvernement formule la dévolution en termes technocratiques (plutôt que politiques) de développement. Deuxièmement, les gouvernements de comté contestent la dépolitisation officielle due aux logiques constantes de la politique de patronage, dans laquelle les dirigeants locaux de comtés sont obligés de se démontrer capables de protéger les intérêts régionaux à la fois en termes d’assistance immédiate et des récits collectifs sur l’injustice. Troisièmement, en lien avec les arguments précédents, les gouverneurs et cadres de comté se retrouvent fragilisés par des attentes incompatibles,

*Email: ngala.k.chome@gmail.com

s'écarter des analyses communes de la décentralisation à travers l'Afrique qui mettent l'accent sur « la mainmise des élites » ou la recentralisation.

Mots-clés: décentralisation; dévolution; dépolitisation; élites locales; vulnérabilité des élites; Côte kenyane

Introduction

On 4 March 2013, Kenyans voted for the first time for officials of county governments across 47 newly established counties following the adoption of a new constitution in 2010. Within this form of decentralization, known as devolution, county governors (new political and executive heads of county governments) are officially expected to develop strong local bureaucracies so as to spur local development and stabilize local politics. On the Kenya coast, county governors are finding themselves constrained in addressing formal and informal expectations of devolution by two distinct features of the current form of devolution. These include ongoing operational logics of local governance that impede the swift implementation of local county government policy, and an over-emphasized limitation of the role of county governors to 'less political' and 'quieter' functions of development. The latter emanates from a central government keen on reducing political contestation by, or involvement with, new local political institutions (county governments) in national policy-making processes that nonetheless affect their jurisdictions (e.g. land, education, and security).

This feature of the politics of devolution in Kenya (that also emanates from current legal designs of devolution) undermines the capability of county governors and their county executive secretaries (essentially, county cabinets) to address locally determined popular expectations of devolution that go beyond the parameters of a quieter, depoliticized role of development. This complicates the newly acquired political status of a new group of political elites (county governors and county executives), making them vulnerable to competing and incompatible expectations of devolution between the centre and the region.

Specifically, ongoing operational logics of local governance – mainly patronage politics and rampant informalization of the local bureaucracy – constrain the development of 'efficient' and 'effective' county government institutions. In addition, patronage politics and rampant informalization of local county bureaucracies are incompatible with central government expectations of county governments – better 'service delivery', bureaucratic 'rationality', and most importantly 'order'. On the other hand, central government logics seeking to divert county government attention to issues of less political significance (de-politicization) serves to weaken the political role of county governors, constraining their ability to address locally determined popular expectations of devolution that go beyond central government expectations of 'order', bureaucratic 'efficiency', and 'effectiveness'.

These popular expectations constitute local pressures placed on county governors and county executive secretaries (who head county executive departments) by local politicians (i.e. Members of County Assemblies (MCAs)), county staff, and ordinary citizens (*wananchi* in Swahili). In this way, county governors and county executives are expected to respond to patronage and other kinds of political demands that are framed less as patronage (to be explained/explored later), yet imbue an ethno-nationalist character.

The initial political consequences of devolution on the Kenya coast have begun to show that county governors and county executives are rendered vulnerable by competing and incompatible logics, between official expectations of the role of devolution and popular expectations of devolution informed by local politics. This incompatibility engenders what is termed in this article as 'elite vulnerability', as opposed to 'elite capture'. From the definition of 'elite capture' (e.g. Labonte 2011, 91), 'elite vulnerability' is defined here as the limited ability by new official

elites (the county governor and county executive secretaries) to entrench their power at the local county level in terms of regulatory ability and in the unchecked advancement of their own priorities at the expense of local communities. ‘Elite vulnerability’ is also defined as the inability of the county governor and county executive secretaries to address popular expectations of devolution.

In sum, for county governors and county executive secretaries, the failure to address central government expectations of devolution relates directly to potential reduction of central government funding of county governments. Naturally and perhaps ironically, this translates to further scrutiny, or centralized governmental control of county governments. On the other hand, the failure to address locally determined popular expectations of devolution (i.e. allowing ongoing operational logics of local governance, including clientelism and notions of ethnic citizenship) will relate directly to their (county governors) chances for re-election.

Elite vulnerability on the Kenya coast is also reinforced by the nature and extent of legitimate authority in the region. Legitimate authority, according to Boone (2003, 362), lowers the costs of social control. On the Kenya coast, however, it has been constrained by multiple fault lines of ethnicity, race, class, and personal rivalry (Willis and Chome 2014). In addition, the marginalization of coastal leaders in national power structures (which would otherwise have bolstered their status as patronage dispensers at the local level) has worked to lower the legitimacy of formal representatives in the region, adding to widespread feelings of political and socio-economic marginalization.

The spurious nature of legitimate authority on the Kenya coast combines with incompatible expectations of devolution to complicate the position of newly established elites at the local county level, making them particularly vulnerable to localized pressures and expectations from the central government. The conclusion is that new local-level elites on the Kenya coast are pursuing a public language of apolitical development alongside a politics of informal patronage, with very limited resources for the latter. They might even constitute new forms of informal decentralized despotisms (Mamdani 1996) but are rendered ‘rather impotent as regards regulatory and mobilizing capacities’ (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2003, 147).

This also suggests that the official expectations of devolution, to stabilize local politics and institutionalize local bureaucratic structures for the swift implementation of policy, are not being realized, and are at best merely performed. In this way, bureaucratic procedures are implemented with enthusiasm without accruing the effects they are designed for. Local governance on the Kenya coast is therefore not a predictable and rationalized technique for the exercise of bureaucratic power (e.g. Ferguson 1994; Planel 2014) but rather a sphere of unpredictability, consisting of informal relationships and the mediation of incompatible logics. In this context, notions of ‘good governance’ are merely performed for their aesthetic values, not for their instrumental considerations (e.g. Eggen 2012).

This observation – forming the central argument of this article – differs from common analyses of decentralization in Africa that emphasize ‘elite capture’ and/or re-centralization. The dominant framework has been to analyse decentralization outcomes based on a set of officially stated objectives. These include institutions with potentialities for rural development (Planel 2014); equality and fairness, including the protection of the poor (Chinigò 2014); service delivery (Conyers 2007); poverty reduction (Crook 2003); or for domination and clientelism (Stokes 2005; Labonte 2011). These narratives overwhelmingly conclude that decentralization empowers the status of existing local elites or of central government actors at the local level.

Few have examined how decentralization reforms relate to local debates about authority and power, ongoing operational logics of local governance, or most importantly the role of popular expectations. Taking a slightly different approach, I follow Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan (2014, 8) in a ‘localized framework within an empirical tradition’, in the examination of devolution on the coastal region that assumes a ‘non-normative position towards the [local state]’. Using

this premise, this article moves beyond the ‘entrenchment of existing power’ model to focus on local demands and how their expectations subvert official expectations. It is this approach that reveals both the vulnerability of local county officials (and elites) to ongoing operational logics of local governance, and of the impotence of central government prerogatives at the local level.

The qualitative methodological approach was based on a series of interviews (conducted in December 2012 and May 2014) with county officials, local politicians, journalists, activists, and ‘ordinary citizens’. This included compiling field observation reports and the analysis of official gubernatorial campaign debates (conducted in February and June 2013 and in May 2014).

The first section of the article offers a historical examination of the devolution debate in Kenya with a view to explaining the struggles that shaped Kenya’s current form of devolution. The second section addresses the literature on decentralization in Africa, drawing lessons from the Kenyan experience of devolution. The third section examines the political consequences of devolution on the Kenya coast.

Coastal politics and the devolution debate in Kenya

The debate about which form of decentralization Kenya should adopt is as old as the post-colonial state itself. During independence constitutional talks, a form of regional decentralization dubbed *Majimbo* in Swahili was proposed and adopted in the 1963 constitution. *Majimbo* (regionalism) was meant in its adoption to protect minority ethnic communities in land and resource distribution (Nyanjom 2011). An ‘alternative vision’ of the independent Kenyan state, *Majimbo* was ‘a proposal for decentralization in which six or more provinces comprising independent Kenya (including the former Coast province) would have equal status’ (Anderson 2005, 547).

Majimbo was short-lived, deemed by powerful sections of Kenya’s ruling elite dedicated to central nationalization as destabilizing in its design and ‘tribalistic’ in its intentions. In its place developed three systems structuring centre–local relations throughout the post-colonial period, favouring an over-centralized, executive–bureaucratic state (Branch and Cheeseman 2008). Firstly, there existed a prefectural provincial (field) administration that self-legitimized on a pervasive ‘will to order’ and an apolitical language of development (Gertzel 1970; Bienen 1974; Widner 1992; Branch and Cheeseman 2006). Secondly, there existed a more informal presidential patronage system that was based on an extensive clientelist network with regional and district-level leaders/patrons across the country (Barkan 1975). Thirdly, the centralized state allowed the continued operation of a system of local government at a variety of levels, whose establishment in 1977 through the Local Government Act (Cap 265) had origins in the colonial period (Oyugi and Kibua 2008).

The local government system, compared to the *Majimbo* system that was removed from the constitution just one year after independence in 1964, was less threatening to central power. By the 1980s, scholars were already describing it as being in ‘institutional decline’ (Oyugi 1983, 107–140). However, rising donor interest in local governance, specifically on the delivery of services and of local participation during the 1990s, resulted in a series of reforms aimed at addressing common problems that became associated with local governance in Africa: corruption, low institutional capacity, and lack of requisite skills (Francis and James 2003). This rising interest to bolster the effectiveness of the local government system in service delivery coincided with renewed calls for the return of *Majimbo*, especially from ethno-regional communities that had supported the system during independence negotiations, such as the Kalenjin in the former Rift Valley province and coastal communities (Ngunyi 1996). Therefore, while *Majimbo* was overwhelmed by dominant nationalism in the 1960s, the debate re-emerged during the return to multi-party politics in the 1990s (Anderson 2005).

Majimbo would again become central during constitutional review discussions in Kenya between 2000 and 2010 that preceded the promulgation of the 2010 constitution (Ghai 2008). Similar to the 1960s' debates, these renewed demands for Majimbo (i.e. for Kenya to be divided into eight strong regions) would be strongly opposed by elites dominating the centre who not only equated Majimbo with disorder and political violence, but were naturally reluctant to relinquish their hold on central power to sub-national entities. Significantly, this debate took place at a time of historic regime change in Kenya, when the Kenya African National Union was ousted by the Kibaki-led National Rainbow Coalition Alliance (NARC) in the 2002 general election.

The differences that emerged within the ruling NARC coalition between 2003 and 2007 regarding what would be the new constitutional order revolved mainly around the form and extent of decentralization and whether Kenya would adopt a presidential or parliamentary system. One of the coalition partners, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by Raila Odinga, favoured a system with a dual executive, a president with a strong prime minister, and that included extensive provisions on devolution (i.e. regionalism/Majimbo). The other coalition partner, the National Alliance Party of Kenya led by the President Mwai Kibaki, supported a system with a single executive and a modest form of decentralization, preferably deconcentration. Essentially, these debates mirrored the ethnic interests represented within the national politics of a country where, as Lynch (2006, 49) observes, 'the negotiation of ethno-regionalism is inexorably intertwined with common perceptions of how political representation and redistribution actually works'.

During this debate, which increasingly focused on notions of ethnic citizenship and autochthony that were also related to the politics of the distribution of national revenue, coastal communities and their representatives felt Majimbo would stand as a bulwark against further domination of the coast by mostly 'up-country' groups, as well as a correcting mechanism for unequal revenue sharing. This domination was specifically perceived to have occurred around the loss of ancestral land and public-sector jobs by coastals to 'up-country' groups, (Stren 1970; Mazrui 1997, 2000; Meilink 2000; Gona 2008; Chome 2014a). At the Bomas of Kenya (a cultural centre in Nairobi) where a consultative forum by the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission chaired by Prof Yash Pal Ghai took place, the 24 coastal delegates were clear about their proposals for the form of decentralization that Kenya should adopt – Majimbo or regionalism.

Specifically, the delegates demanded that 70% of coastal regional revenue be retained there and that control of minerals and ports be left to the coast Jimbo (singular for Majimbo); in their view, a key concession (Devereux 2012). On the other hand, the political group that controlled the executive branch, comprising individuals close to President Kibaki, favoured a centralized presidential system and very modest decentralization. Given that the Kikuyu (the group supporting the then President, Kibaki) have historically dominated national voting figures, they could easily dominate electoral pacts with other ethno-regional communities, thus ensuring

Table 1. Electoral data, coast region (former Coast province).

| | Estimated total population | Registered voters | Voter turnout | Turnout as % of total registration | Turnout as % of total population |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Kiambu County | 1,623,282 | 860,716 | 785,735 | 91.3 | 48.2 |
| Coast region (6 counties) | 3,325,507 | 1,164,083 | 817,209 | 70.2 | 24.6 |

Source: Electoral Commission of Kenya.

their capture of a powerful presidency. Conversely, coastal communities, which have historically been electorally weaker compared to other parts of the country (see [Table 1](#)), supported the Odinga-led LDP faction of the ruling NARC coalition that favoured Majimbo.

The other factor explaining why powerful Kikuyu politicians were opposed to demands for Majimbo is that their co-ethnics, compared to other groups, have mostly settled in other parts of Kenya outside their ‘ethnic homeland’, the former central province. This process of migration was engendered by a host of colonial and post-colonial land policies (Gertzel 1970; Ngunyi 1996). The Kikuyu, Kenya’s dominant community in demographic, political, and economic terms, have not only been perceived as ‘guests’ in these other parts of the country (mostly on the former Rift Valley and Coast provinces), but also as dominant within local economies and politics (Lonsdale 2008). Kikuyu politicians therefore feared that Majimbo would entrench political tribalism and ethnic citizenship, where a ‘certain ethnic community may have to be asked to leave a particular region and go back to their [ethnic homeland]’ (Muia 2008, 94).

As has been observed elsewhere, ‘the real issue behind the debate on [decentralization], which ostensibly focuses on power sharing between center and periphery, is the perennial concern with access to land’ (Markakis 2011, 356). As such, politicians opposed to Majimbo/regionalism argued that it would balkanize the country, promote ethnicity, and ignite land clashes (Ghai 2008). Even though regionalism was not adopted in the resulting constitutional draft presented (and defeated) at a referendum in 2005, these fears would be confirmed with the occurrence of post-election violence following the 2007 general elections, targeted mainly at Kikuyu peasants and residents on the former Rift Valley province and parts of the former Coast and Western provinces. Demands for the adoption of Majimbo, which on the Kenya coast and Rift Valley regions was perceived in more ethnic-regionalist terms, was blamed for the occurrence of the violence that left approximately 1300 dead and about 300,000 others displaced (Anderson and Lochery 2008).

After the violence of 2007–2008, a de-legitimization of political protest and specifically calls for Majimbo ensued. The last phase of the constitutional review process that begun in 2009, and which ended with the promulgation of a new constitution in 2010, took care to avoid the Majimbo idea (Chome 2014a, 2014b). Despite strong opposition to institutional regionalism, ethno-regionalism remained as the central organizing principle of national politics in Kenya. During the 2009–2010 talks, the powerful detractors of Majimbo elected to support a form of decentralization that was based not on regions, but on 47 counties (with the coast region consisting of six counties). Additionally, it was desirable that this form of decentralization – devolution – was not allocated political responsibilities for the same issues that Majimbo was, according to its supporters, meant to address. The role of county governments was generally limited to simple, quieter issues of service delivery and local development. This form of devolution was favoured since it did not appear to threaten ‘national unity’ nor, most importantly, the position and power of political elites benefiting from a strong centralized state ([Figure 1](#)).

In actual terms, Kenya’s current devolved system of governance left the structures of the central government (for instance, the provincial administration) almost unchanged, even as the introduction of relatively meaningful local elections produced political elites at the local level who were accountable to a local electorate and therefore have a locally determined political mandate. In retaining the provincial administration and renaming the central government administration, elites at the national level have sought to limit and undermine devolution.

In this way, rather than concluding a previous conversation about decentralization through which issues of coastal marginalization and exclusion from national politics were debated, the current form of devolution has in fact accentuated this debate. The popular expectation from the grassroots level on the coast is that devolution addresses what Majimbo was meant to address: historical injustices around land; access to public-sector jobs; retention of regional

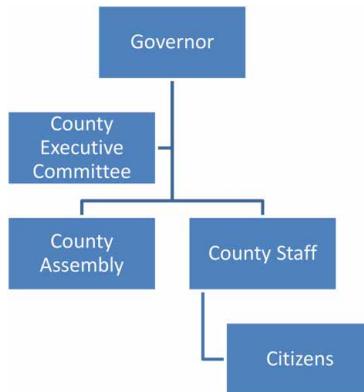


Figure 1. County system of government in Kenya.
Source: Generated by author.

revenue; and control over minerals and ports (Interview 7, Kwale, 11 May 2014; Mombasa County Assembly Special Session Notes, 12 May 2014; *Daily Nation*, 13 May 2014).

Willis and Chome (2014, 6–7) reported that some, ‘in discussion of the 2010 constitution, and who had claimed to represent coast opinion, had made clear their dissatisfaction at the very modest decentralisation offered by the new constitution, dismissively calling it the *vijimbo* [miniature regions] constitution’. In fact, according to an MCA in Kilifi County, ‘[coastal people] were shocked that the [decentralized] units were not the former [eight] provinces’ (Interview 1, Kilifi, 7 May 2014). Across interviews, there was a general sentiment that the devolution offered by the 2010 constitution was, as a grassroots activist put it, ‘meant to divide us [Coastals] since they created smaller units’ (Interview 2, Likoni, December 2012).

This continuing debate has also pitted current central government officials (with political elites who have been strongly opposed to *Majimbo* dominant) with local politicians – particularly coastal county governors – who have been elected at the county level to address the historical injustices that *Majimbo* was, according to them, meant to correct. This ongoing *Majimbo* discourse, with its logics of local autonomy, ownership, autochthony, and ethnic citizenship, currently operates at the local level as the justifying narrative for ongoing operational logics of local governance, that is, patronage politics and the informalization and personalization of county bureaucracies. The result is that this incompatibility between official codes – expecting a limited and apolitical role for county governments – and popular expectations at the local level are rendering the status of new county-based political elites vulnerable. This ‘elite vulnerability’ has not been sufficiently accounted for in the literature on decentralization in Africa.

Decentralization and the local state in Africa

Most analysts of decentralization in Africa contend that these reforms have led to ‘elite capture’ where ‘elites control, shape, or manipulate [local] decision-making processes or institutions in ways that serve their self-interests and priorities, typically resulting in personal gain at the expense of “non-elites” and local communities’ (Labonte 2011, 91). Since, in most of sub-Saharan Africa, decentralization is packaged as a high developmental priority (Boone 1998, 2003, 36), these analyses also resonate with the notion of ‘encadrement’ (e.g. Clapham 2002, 9–32), understood as the ‘incorporation into structures of control conflated with developmental objectives’. In particular, the latter becomes more prominent where the state’s internal position

has shifted to a position at the local interface, ‘the coalface of the subjugation process’ (Planel 2014, 420).

This idea that devolution ‘reinforces the political, administrative, and even economic prerogatives of local-level notables’ (Boone 2003, 360), or, better ‘control’ of mostly rural populations by central government agencies (Pierre-Yves le Meur 1998, 58), is not evidenced by the Kenyan coast experience of devolution. Therefore, if one argues that devolution on the Kenya coast is a process whose course can only be understood by examining events at the local level, and without a pre-conceived framework of the local state, the meaning and consequences of devolution cannot be easily determined and are usually contested.

Authors – mostly anthropologists – have documented cases where an increase in the presence of state institutions at the local level does not necessarily mean better service delivery or increased regulation of local communities (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2003; Blundo 2006; Blundo and Le Meur 2008; Emmenegger, Keno, and Hagmann 2011). The argument is that forms of decentralization are more capable of being acted upon by long-established logics and popular ideas. By breaking up centralized state structures and fragmenting local political arenas, decentralization reforms promise greater procedural heterogeneity and opening up of political opportunities for previously excluded actors. This necessitates constant negotiation and sometimes dilutes state power and reduces the predictability of political processes at the local level (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2003). In sum, the general observation on the Kenya coast is that ongoing operational logics of local governance and how these intertwine with popular expectations and communal narratives of injustice/belonging is what determines best bureaucratic outcomes at the local level.

In particular, pervasive informalization of the local state in sub-Saharan Africa is a long-established local governance logic, driven by austerity, ethnicity, and the politics of trust (Berman 2004; Hornberger 2004). Its practical appeal is that it subverts state authority by perforating the boundaries between state and non-state – a boundary that bureaucratic rationality (impartiality, effectiveness, and efficiency) consciously strives to reconstruct in everyday encounters with the public (Mitchell 1999; Olivier de Sardan 2008). Arguably, it can therefore be said that the consequences of devolution on the Kenya coast (and elsewhere) are about these re-negotiations of state and society boundaries, which are in turn underlined by incompatible expectations and not necessarily the preconceived ideological and political motivations of bureaucratic rationalization, efficiency, and ‘developmental governance’ that constitute part of the re-negotiations.

To understand the politics of devolution in Kenya in general and on the coast in particular, this article employs a historical approach, examining the continuation of salient operational logics of local governance and local debates about power and authority, through which the meanings of devolution are constantly re-negotiated. This is how emergent local political practices and debates, including the design of Kenya’s current form of devolution, will be made sense of. This approach fits well with the argument that the consequences of devolution are informed by the context of local politics and ongoing debates about legitimacy, power, and authority, including the politics of re-distribution. The conclusion is that on the Kenya coast, local ‘elite capture’ of devolved institutions has meant increased local patronage, but the combination of the actual functioning of the local state with the incongruent nature of official and popular expectations of devolution (both of which are inadequately addressed by the current form of devolution) have meant a limited entrenchment of local elite power.

The political consequences of devolution on the Kenya coast

After the promulgation of the 2010 constitution, older debates associated with Majimbo, public expressions of secessionism on the coast, and political clientelism at the local level persisted (Willis and Gona 2012). Since their election, coastal governors have continued to articulate the

ideas that underpinned the demands for regionalism. Separately, they have engaged the central government on the coastal land issue, control over minerals on the coast, and on the fate of the port of Mombasa (including ferry services), claiming that their county governments should have a central role. These resources, as it is argued, ‘belong to the coast’ and as such should be exploited by their local governments for the benefit of coastals (*Daily Nation*, May 13, 2014). Matters came to a head in mid-2014 when Mr Hassan Joho, the county governor of Mombasa, accentuated his demands by rallying other coastal and opposition leaders in a special session of the Mombasa County Assembly to pressure the national government to release control of the Port of Mombasa (a major national parastatal), on failure of which he will initiate a forcible takeover (*Daily Nation*, May 13, 2014).

Demands such as these were also in line with other nationwide protests by county governors against the central government over the division of power, responsibilities, and revenue (*Standard Digital*, 23 August 2013). The argument of the county governors was that public expectations of the county governments could not be met with the current revenue allocations – a constitutional minimum of 15% of national revenue – and many governors, including coastal governors, were demanding more responsibilities at the local level than the constitution had permitted. Indeed, the constitution has divided and described in great detail functions of government between county governments and the central government, allocating significant roles to the latter. The outcome of the nature in which the constitution has allocated functions between the two levels of government is that issues that are central in coastal politics (such as control over local minerals and ports, land, the addressing of land historical injustices, education provision, infrastructure development, and jobs) continue to be the responsibility of the central government. In large measure, this explains why county governors on the coast are finding themselves in a difficult position: with an electorate that expects them to address more popular expectations than devolution has heretofore permitted.

The central government, on the other hand, has quite noticeably exercised hostility towards county governments and county governors who have been particularly keen on entrenching their power. The language in a policy framework for ‘strengthening the delivery of national government functions at the county level’, which was issued by the central government at the height of calls for a constitutional amendment, is quite striking and revealing. The policy document seeks to rationalize central government bureaucracies at the local level that exist parallel to county administrations, bringing them under the control and supervision of newly established central government officials called County Commissioners (CCs), appointed by and answerable to the president (*Daily Nation*, May 16, 2014). The creation of this position, like that of local government managers in Ethiopia and District Executives in Ghana, is evidence of the ‘contradictions of an expanded local government arena and the concomitance and continuity of hierarchical intra-governmental relations and practices that undermine the very principle of decentralisation’ (Emmenegger, Keno, and Hagmann 2011, 46).

The existence of CCs on the coast has worked, much to the aggravation of county governors. CCs – not governors – are responsible for central government functions at the local level and chair the important county security committee. In 2013 and 2014, terrorist attacks escalated on the Kenya coast. These attacks, which the Al-Qaeda-backed Al-Shabaab group based in Somalia has claimed responsibility for and killed more than sixty people in a span of three months (Ayadike 2014; Mwakimako and Willis 2014). In July 2014, after a group of gunmen attacked a village and a police station in Lamu County leaving at least 22 dead, the governor, Mr Issa Timamy, was arrested. This was related to the central government’s claim that the attack was the work of ‘local political networks’, suggesting the role of local ethnic politics. Earlier, the CC in Kilifi County (neighbouring Lamu) had issued reports claiming that elements of a coastal secessionist group had regrouped and were arming themselves to attack upcountry

people living on the coast, particularly Kikuyu. The attack in Lamu was read by the central government in these terms, in a county where land claims have historically pitted the ‘indigenous’ coastal community of Bajuni against Kikuyu families that were relocated there by a land settlement scheme in the 1970s. The point is that devolution has not allocated responsibility for security to county governors, which works to further complicate their political status as newly established political elites at the local level.

Addressing his supporters on live media posted on his social network page, the Governor of Mombasa explained:

[Due to] historical injustices, today, Mombasa is not safe, security has deteriorated. We have said that we shall not wait for another person to be shot dead. We shall tell you if you [The President and the county commissioner] are not capable. Let’s not beat around the bush, those days when the president was venerated by other leaders has come to an end. You the president you have been elected and me, Hassan Joho, I have also been elected as governor. Respect me and I shall respect you.¹

The County Senator, Mr Hassan Omar, agreed with the governor’s remarks, adding:

Today you have brought us county commissioners, yet we have elected county governors ... [...] We want a referendum ... we want to bring control over security to governors. Everyone asks us [county leadership] when they see potholes and insecurity, not Marwa [the county commissioner]. So if people ask us, then we have to have responsibility over national security.²

Under the above context, when an assistant CC posted in Kilifi County was asked whether devolution had improved security provisioning by way of increased local surveillance, his quick answer was that ‘devolution is only for development’ (Interview 8, Kilifi, 7 May 2014). In this way, less than four years after the 2010 constitution was promulgated and less than a year after they were elected into office, governors, especially from regions such as the coast, who did not vote overwhelmingly for the current president, Uhuru Kenyatta, were threatening to mobilize popular support for a constitutional amendment touching on the provisions of devolution.

Most of the arguments made in support of the referendum align with what were identified as the key aims of Majimbo, as spelled out by delegates from the coast during the constitutional review process that took place at the Bomas of Kenya in Nairobi. The Mombasa County Women’s Representative in the National Assembly summarized: ‘we still haven’t gotten our land, we shall not be silent, we haven’t gotten our right to the port, we shall not be silent’.³

Thus, with the exception of one governor (Tana River County) five coastal governors joined their counterparts from the Rift Valley region and Western Kenya to demand a national referendum on the constitution that would raise the constitutional minimum of national revenue sharing between the county and central governments – from 15% to 45% – and increase the powers and responsibilities of county governors (*Standard Digital*, 23 August 2013; *Daily Nation*, April 4, 2014). Ultimately, these developments provide signs of the vulnerability of County Governors and their County Executives Secretaries, caught between official and popular expectations; but a closer examination reveals that their vulnerability also results from patronage politics and ongoing operational logics of local governance. These complicate the development of ‘effective’ and ‘efficient’ county bureaucracies for the swift implementation of local county policy.

At the time of writing, it was not clear whether a transfer of control over security agencies to county administrations would have improved the existing security situations on the coast, since county governors would have to depend on the same structures, but it is apparent that increasing local techno-bureaucratization (of county technocrats, national government institutions, and the ubiquitous NGOs) was having minimal impact on what they were officially meant to achieve

(Interview 9, Mombasa, 9 May 2014). This theme was recurrent during interviews with ‘ordinary citizens’ (Interview 6, Kilifi, 8 May 2014). The official objectives – increased bureaucratic efficiency – were not being met. The county governments continue to be given meaning, coherence, and shape by county governors, their appointed executive committees, and MCAs, in the exultant and enthusiastic acquisition of new or refurbished office blocks, including official governor mansions, official vehicles, titles, higher salaries, and official residences (Interview 1, Kilifi, 7 May 2014). These all constitute part of local aesthetic expressions of bureaucratic effectiveness and efficiency (*Standard Digital*, 7 April 2013).

Despite such performative measures, and their empowerment by a new ‘globalized’ language of expertise and technical knowledge, the private informalization of county bureaucracy remains rampant. This works to subvert official codes and counterbalance the power of new local political elites – especially county governors and new executive heads – from below. In one instance, empirical evidence suggested that both the national and county governments do not even possess comprehensive records of their public servants (*Standard Digital*, 14 July 2014: Interview 4, Mombasa, 8 May 2014). In addition to complicating the official objectives of bureaucratic ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’, opportunities to informalize the local state are therefore numerous. This was evident from a staff audit conducted by the new county government of Mombasa: out of the 2763 employees, only one presented a valid employment letter; 465 others had forged letters of employment; while 55 were found to have surpassed the retirement age of 60 years (*The Star*, 24 July 2013). After the audit was completed, the county governor was still forced to rescind his decision to remove 1059 of these ‘ghost workers’ when, just a few weeks after he was elected, a council staff strike demonstrated its power, resulting in a crisis of basic service provision such as garbage collection, health, and sewerage (*Business Daily*, 18 March 2013).

The majority of these ‘civil servants’, some of whom included children, had informally been brought into the service of the former council authority as a result of clientelism (Interview 4, Mombasa, 8 May 2014). In addition, partially implemented civil service reforms during structural adjustment had encouraged voluntary redundancies (Mbai 2003). Important services within local authorities and national government agencies and departments fell into the hands of non-administrative, sometimes ‘voluntary’, personnel. In the context of ‘opaque, under-equipped administrations that are barely controlled and have disproportionate discretionary powers’, these contractual, voluntary, or informal staff contribute both to the daily (dis-)functioning of the state and to its circumvention (Blundo 2006, 799).

In addition to problems of control and rationalization, informalization creates another problem for the new local leadership on the coast: a limited ability to raise local revenue. The capacity to meet service delivery costs from revenue raised by county governments varies across counties but the trend is towards strong dependence on revenue collected by the central government, which in turn increases pressure for ‘order’ ‘efficiency’, and ‘stability’ from central government officials over county leadership. For example, the estimation of the possible capacity to meet their financial obligations from locally raised revenue includes 45% for Kwale, 55% for Kilifi, and 58% for Mombasa (Commission on Revenue Allocation 2011). However, the scale of corruption and of private informalization of local administrative institutions, especially in positions with a strong density of transactions such as municipal tax collector, means that the financial independence of the county governments, and therefore the power of the county governor and his executives, is lowered.

These problems persist despite the creation of new positions that have attracted educated professionals and raised the existing skill-set of managers at the local level (Interview 10, Kilifi, 10 May 2014). These new managers (county governor and a local technocratic cabinet) are currently leading county administrations composed of staff inherited from former local councils, and have

to contend with county assemblies dominated by politicians (MCAs) who have served the previous local council system. These actors bring to the new administrations institutional memory but also long-established operational logics of local governance steeped in austerity, ethnicity, and the politics of trust (Interview 3, Kwale, 1 March 2013).

The expectation, similar to the official aims of devolution, was that technocrats would best serve the needs of developing strong, rationalized, and effective local bureaucracies (Interview 7, Kwale, 11 May 2014). Following from this consensus, the governors of Mombasa, Kilifi, and Kwale employed highly technocratic executive committees (*Saturday Nation*, 4 May 2013). The 10-member county executive committee of Kilifi, Kenya's ninth poorest county, is a good example. Appointed by Mr Amason Kingi, it includes four Master's graduates and a Doctorate, with an additional two pursuing Master's degrees at the time of writing. Similarly in Migori County (outside the coast), the governor explained to the media that he had chosen 'people of integrity who will deliver', adding that 'politics must take a back seat when we are discussing development' (*Saturday Nation*, 4 May 2013). The notion of an educated and technocratic government is closely related to bureaucratic rationality, which is 'strongly marked by administrative hierarchies, by close involvement of the state apparatus, by the primacy of technical knowledge over know-how and by the implementation of detailed procedures' (Planel 2014, 420). Discursively, all these features are present on the Kenya coast, where the ideas of techno-bureaucratic rule offer a new grammar and narrative within which local executives make sense of their role in particular, and of the meaning of devolution in general (Interview 4, Mombasa, 8 May 2014; Interview 5, Kilifi, 7 May 2014). These 'modernizing bureaucrats' therefore find themselves operating at the interface between two worlds (Cooper 1997).

Elsewhere, such de-politicization or anti-politics (Ferguson 1994) has been noted for its entrenchment of local elite power and the disempowerment of citizens. On the Kenya coast it was interesting to observe that the idea that people should be governed by an administration run by experts with experience in the technocratized and formalized world of 'development' was actually quite popular at the grassroots level (Mombasa Gubernatorial Debate, Mombasa, 2013; Interview 4, Mombasa, 8 May 2014). This popularity persisted even as technocratic rule has continued to be associated with disempowerment of particularly rural and poor citizens (Ansoms 2009; Chemouni 2014; Planel 2014). Nevertheless, the results of local elections during the 2013 elections were still better explained by ethnicity and patronage (Willis and Chome 2014). These appeals to technocracy are therefore best understood for their aesthetic expressions rather than being the result of instrumental considerations (Eggen 2012). The appointment of a technocratic executive committee, for example, 'creates an image, albeit temporary, of a "legible", well-organised society and a knowledgeable, caring state' (Eggen 2012, 1). This image also conceals and provides coherence to a raft of incompatibilities, informalized practices, and the failure to achieve intended outcomes – in this case that of better service delivery. At the local level, the popularity that the image of a 'knowledgeable local state' achieves is also drawn from attempts by ordinary people and local elites to convey an 'orderly' image of themselves, as suggested by an MCA in Kilifi County regarding the new county assemblies: 'we are not using vernacular during proceedings anymore, we are now legislators, serious people'.

In terms of regulatory ability, these expressions of bureaucratic power are at the very least impotent and 'ordinary citizens' seem generally unaffected (Interview 6, Mariakani, 8 May 2014). On the other hand, interviews with local executives suggested a significant amount of frustration (Interview 4, Mombasa, 8 May 2014). One head of a county public service intimated: 'I am frustrated because I came here to deliver services [...] yet former local government logic is affecting service delivery due to low capacity [and] most money goes into administrative functions' (Interview 5, Kilifi, 7 May 2014). In addition to this, county executives appeared vulnerable in the production of policy documents required by legislation, such as a five-year County

Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and budgetary estimates. The latter, among others, was cited as the reason for the impeachment by the Mombasa County Assembly of one executive secretary. The preparation of these documents (a key role expected of county executives) requires the support of council staff and MCAs, yet, according to the secretary of a county public service, ‘most of these workers are not educated [and] some MCAs do not even know what a CIDP means’ (Interview 5, Kilifi, 7 May 2014).

The above examples demonstrate how the subversion of the official authority of the county governors and their local executive officials by ongoing operational logics of local governance are making it difficult to develop easily controllable and effective local administrations. The latter is a key expectation by a central government focused on ‘order’, ‘stability’, and the swift implementation of development policy, and through which the county governments are funded. In addition, the central government has proceeded to produce development toolkits for every county governor across the country, which, despite governors’ accountability to their electorates, summarizes Vision 2030 (a central government development vision) projects to be implemented in the respective jurisdictions. Considered with a host of national legislation guiding county planning and budgeting, the Vision 2030 governor toolkit potentially undermines the space available for county governors to address popular expectations, as well as implement their own envisaged programmes (Interview 5, Kilifi, 6 May 2014).

The CIDPs also restrict the space available to county governors and executive secretaries in development planning at the county level as they allow wide discretion to the central government in determining the procedural details, targets, and monitoring systems, including alignment with Vision 2030 (Interview 5, Kilifi, 7 May 2014). In addition, national legislation regarding counties provides that no public funds shall be appropriated to fund projects not listed in the CIDPs. In sum, these policy prescriptions aim to maintain a ‘largely top-down, supply-led, government-organised and standardised’ service delivery at the local level that may greatly undermine local participation and, most significantly, the power of locally elected executives (Pankhurst 2008, 25). However, these measures, which have the potential to translate into the circulation of a disciplinary power on the ground conflated as development, come face-to-face with pre-established logics and popular demands. This makes the position of those tasked with the responsibility for both local representation and ‘development’ tenuous and vulnerable.

As suggested above, these policy designs have not replaced constant recourse towards personalization and informalization of the county administrations, appealing mostly to local politicians (MCAs), county staff, and the electorate. The local state, in these terms, meets and has demands placed on it by local communities through informal and private channels. It is through these personalized channels in everyday encounters between the official and the non-official that localized and popular demands are placed on the new institutions and through which the consequences of devolution are constantly debated and negotiated. This practice is so widespread that one MCA in Kilifi County reiterated that their (MCA’s) constant encouragement for the public to attend the official public participation and consultation forums often resulted in rebuttals accusing the county leadership of running out of ideas (Interview 1, Kilifi, 7 May 2014). The findings of a national survey on devolution and governance titled ‘Is it my business?’ confirmed the MCA’s statement. It showed that public participation forums were not included in the list of interaction platforms between citizens and the county leadership. A majority of these (79%) were reported to occur at social gatherings, especially burials, fundraising meetings, and weddings (Transparency International Kenya 2014). The interviewee in Kilifi County claimed that since he became MCA, he had been receiving invitations to up to six burials every weekend (Interview 1, Kilifi, 7 May 2014).

These informalized channels provide space for the governors and county executives to settle individual cases presented to them by MCAs, county staff, and local communities. In this sense,

the formal institutions and the county offices exist primarily to provide an aura of legality for decisions made in such informal social gatherings, traditional brew bars (Mangweni), and hotels. Grand government policies and aims [like Vision 2030] seem like ‘a mountain at the national level ... [...] but shrink to the size of a leaf at the county level and finally turn to ash at the grassroots’ (Emmenegger, Keno, and Hagmann 2011, 748). Local discursive repertoires in interviews, informal discussions, and observations at political gatherings reveal that popular expectations of devolution on the Kenya coast continue to be pegged on the historical aims and intentions of Majimbo. As explained above, these aims feature real intentions for localized control over natural resources, including land and civil service jobs, with coastals claiming primacy.

This notion of control resonates with the politics of belonging but also provides a justification for clientelistic practices at the local level that have been accentuated with the introduction of devolution. Pressure for increased local patronage and provision of clientelistic goods such as casual jobs, school bursaries, and small handouts (including personal contributions to aid social events such as marriages and festivals within their wards) explains why Members of County Assemblies (in Kilifi and Kwale counties) passed Ward Development and Scholarship Fund Bills. Elsewhere in the country (Meru, Kericho, Embu), county governors or executives who have opposed a re-direction of resources to MCAs were impeached by their respective assemblies.

A predictable likelihood is that pressures for clientelistic goods will increase as the salaries of local politicians (MCAs, Governors) and their personal emoluments visibly expand due to the capture of new local institutions. However, this will arguably exacerbate their potential vulnerability. Indeed, as Lindberg (2010, 117) contends, ‘political clientelism can endogenously undermine the conditions for its own existence’. Local debates about devolution and whether the current version is what was meant or not meant by Majimbo (an idea that has nonetheless maintained its popularity on the coast) will continue. This can be seen in Mr Hassan Joho’s assertions regarding the Port of Mombasa and by the reactions of the central government towards devolved governments.

Majimbo-ism (ideas related to the intentions behind Majimbo) currently operates as a discursive tool shaping local understandings of devolution, which itself is embedded within ethnic readings of belonging and autonomy. The idea forms a central underlying justification for the personalization and informalization of local political institutions. Terms like ‘our jobs’, ‘our port’, and ‘our land’ were recurrent during a special session of the Mombasa County Assembly during which coastal leaders demanded more power, autonomy, and control over local resources. Clientelism therefore joins with other ideas, framed less as patronage, that imbue an ethno-regional/nationalist character, and are not in line with the official expectations of ‘service delivery’, ‘efficiency’, and ‘development’ – terms that are often abstracted from politics.

The somewhat passive allowance by most governors of local informalization, corruption, and a subversion of official and legal codes (e.g. allowing MCAs executive control over county funds) is therefore explained by their weakened position to establish a suitable way of developing strong local bureaucracies and to simultaneously address issues of coastal marginalization through which these practices are legitimated. Devolution will therefore mean that issues of coastal marginalization and clientelism will continue to assume a central place within coastal politics, rather than bring about an end to them. Leaders, especially county governors and their executive committees, are expected to be responsive for a set of incompatible demands, and while it continues to be interesting to observe how some (at a more idiosyncratic level) will navigate the consequences of devolution on the Coast, it is clear that their position remains vulnerable.

Conclusion

This article has shown how a concept of state reform such as devolution can carry multiple meanings and aims if understood in local political contexts. This, it is argued, produces unpredictable outcomes, where local governance is reduced to a sphere of negotiations, translations, ‘capture’, and ‘vulnerability’. Local bureaucratic institutions are made to appear ‘efficient’ and ‘effective’ so as to create an image of a legible society and a knowledgeable local state, while concurrently concealing informalization, clientelism, and the salience of popular demands. Using a localized, non-normative approach, this article addressed a wider literature on decentralization in Africa that has emphasized ‘elite capture’ and the entrenchment of localized or central power at the local level. The example of devolution on the Kenya coast shows that emerging elites at the local level are constrained in entrenching their new position, pursuing a public language of apolitical development alongside a politics of informal patronage.

‘Elite vulnerability’ is mainly a result of the fact that the current form of decentralization in Kenya is not neatly aligned with popular expectations on the coast, which largely imbue ethno-nationalist and clientelist readings of devolution and focus on ‘order’, ‘stability’, and ‘efficient service delivery’. These readings are associated with the aims of a former form of decentralization adopted in the 1960s – Majimbo – an idea for regionalism that was abandoned in favour of nationalism and centralization yet did not disappear due to Kenya’s ethnicized discourse of politics. Given the importance of local issues and of Majimbo ideology on the Kenya coast, it follows that these popular expectations of the local makings of the state will play the most definitive role in the outcomes of devolution and will form the central platform upon which locally elected officials will be judged by voters, especially by those who consider themselves as belonging to the coast.

Acknowledgements

A number of colleagues have offered advice and assistance in conducting fieldwork for this article and during its writing, but particular thanks should go to Joost Fontein, Justin Willis, Michelle D’Arcy, Gabrielle Lynch, and Andrea Scheibler for their valuable comments. Fieldwork for this article was simultaneously conducted with another (but related) project funded by the ESRC studying the reform process in Kenya.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. Video posted on Hon. Hassan Ali Joho, Facebook page, 14 July 2014, www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=721877704537245&fref=nf.
2. Ibid.
3. Video posted on Hon. Hassan Ali Joho, Facebook page, 28 July 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=728835353841480&set=vb.215892765135744&type=2&t>.

References

- Anderson, D. 2005. “‘Yours in Struggle for Majimbo’. Nationalism and the Party Politics of Decolonization in Kenya, 1955–64.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 40 (3): 547–564.
- Anderson, D., and E. Lochery. 2008. “Violence and Exodus in Kenya’s Rift Valley, 2008: Predictable and Preventable?” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 2 (2): 328–343.
- Ansoms, A. 2009. “Re-engineering Rural Society: The Visions and Ambitions of the Rwandan Elite.” *African Affairs* 108 (431): 289–309.

- Ayadike, O. 2014. "Conflict Dynamics on Kenya's Troubled Coast." *Africa Review*. <http://www.africareview.com/Special-Reports/Conflict-dynamics-on-Kenya-coast/-/979182/2395530/-/u1qe8sz/-index.html>.
- Barkan, J.D.. 1975. "Bringing Home The Pork: Legislative Behaviour, Rural Development and Political Change in East Africa." In *Legislatures in Development*, edited by J. Smith, and L. Musolf, 265–288. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Berman, B. 2004. "Ethnicity, Bureaucracy and Democracy." In *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, edited by B. Berman, D. Eyoh, and W. Kymlicka, 23–38. Oxford: James Currey.
- Bienen, B. 1974. *Kenya: The Politics of Participation and Control*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bierschenk, T., and J.-P. Olivier de Sardan. 2003. "Powers in the Village: Rural Benin Between Democratisation and Decentralisation." *Journal of the International African Institute* 73 (2): 145–173.
- Bierschenk, T., and J.-P. Olivier de Sardan. 2014. "Studying the Dynamics of African Bureaucracies. An Introduction to States at Work." In *States at Work. The Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*, edited by T. Bierschenk and J.-P. Olivier de Sardan, 3–34. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic.
- Blundo, G. 2006. "Dealing with the Local State: The Informal Privatization of Street-Level Bureaucracies in Senegal." *Development and Change* 37 (4): 799–819.
- Blundo, G., and P.-Y. Le Meur. 2008. "Introduction, an Anthropology of Everyday Governance: Collective Service-Delivery and Subject Making." In *The Governance of Daily Life in Africa: Ethnographic Explorations of Public and Collective Services*, edited by G. Blundo and P.-Y. Le Meur, 1–38. Leiden: Brill Academic.
- Boone, C. 1998. "State Building in the African Countryside: Structure and Politics at the Grassroots." *Journal of Development Studies* 34 (4): 1–31.
- Boone, C. 2003. "Decentralization as Political Strategy in West Africa." *Comparative Political Studies* 36 (4): 355–380.
- Branch, D., and N. Cheeseman. 2006. "The Politics of Control in Kenya: Understanding the Bureaucratic-Executive State, 1952–78." *Review of African Political Economy* 33 (107): 11–31.
- Branch, D., and N. Cheeseman. 2008. "Democratization. Sequencing and State Failure in Africa: Lessons from Kenya." *African Affairs* 108 (430): 1–26.
- Chemouni, B. 2014. "Explaining the Design of the Rwandan Decentralization: Elite Vulnerability and the Territorial Repartition of Power." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8 (2): 246–262. doi:10.1080/17531055.2014.891800
- Chinigò, D. 2014. "Decentralization and Agrarian Transformation in Ethiopia: Extending the Power of the Federal State." *Critical African Studies* 6 (1): 40–56. doi:10.1080/21681392.2014.853986.
- Chome, N. 2014a. "Marginalisation politique et politisation des structures alternatives de pouvoir dans la province de la côte au Kenya en 2013." *Afrique Contemporaine* 247: 87–105.
- Chome, N. 2014b. "The Grassroots Are Very Complicated: Marginalization and the Emergence of Alternative Authority in the Kenyan Coast 2013 Elections." In *Kenya's Past as Prologue: Voters, Violence and the 2013 General Election*, edited by C. Thibon, M.A. Fouere, M. Ndeda, S. Mwangi, 247–261. Nairobi: Twaweza Communications.
- Clapham, C. 2002. "Controlling Space in Ethiopia." In *Remapping Ethiopia, Socialism and After*, edited by W. James, D. L. Donham, E. Kurimoto, and A. Triulzi, 9–32. Oxford: James Currey.
- Commission on Revenue Allocation. 2011. *Kenya County Fact Sheet*. Nairobi, Republic of Kenya.
- Conyers, D. 2007. "Decentralisation and Service-Delivery: Lessons from Sub-Saharan Africa." *IDS Bulletin* 38 (1): 18–32.
- Cooper, F. 1997. "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans and the Development Concept." In *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, edited by F. Cooper and R. Packard, 64–92. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Crook, R. C. 2003. "Decentralization and Poverty Reduction in Africa: The Politics of Local-Central Relations." *Public Administration and Development* 23 (1): 77–88.
- Devereux, F. 2012. "From Majimbo to Mwambao: Kenya's Coastal Politics and the Threat of Secession." Unpublished MSc thesis, University of Oxford.
- Eggen, O. 2012. "Performing Good Governance: The Aesthetics of Bureaucratic Governance in Malawi." *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 77 (1): 1–23.
- Emmenegger, R., S. Keno, and T. Hagmann. 2011. "Decentralization to the Household: Expansion and Limits of State Power in Rural Oromiya." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5 (4): 733–754.
- Ferguson, J. 1994. *The Anti-politics Machine. 'Development', Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Francis, P., and R. James. 2003. "Balancing Rural Poverty Reduction and Citizen Participation: The Contradictions of Uganda's Decentralization Program." *World Development* 31 (2): 325–337.
- Gertzel, C. 1970. *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–68*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- Ghai, Y. 2008. "Devolution: Restructuring the Kenyan State." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 2 (2): 211–226.
- Gona, G. 2008. "Changing Political Faces on Kenya's Coast, 1992–2007." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 2 (2): 242–253.
- Hornberger, J. 2004. "'My Police – Your Police': The Informal Privatisation of the Police in the Inner City of Johannesburg." *African Studies* 63 (2): 213–230.
- Labonte, M. 2011. "From Patronage to Peacebuilding: Elite Capture and Governance from Below in Sierra Leone." *African Affairs* 111 (442): 90–115.
- le Meur, P. 1998. "Décentralisation par le bas et participation clientéliste au Bénin [Decentralization from below and Clientelist Politics in Benin]." *APAD [Association Euro 64. Africaine pour l'Anthropologie du Changement Social et du Développement] Bulletin* 15: 49–64.
- Lindberg, S. 2010. "What Accountability Pressures Do Mps in Africa Face and How Do They Respond?" *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48: 117–142.
- Lonsdale, J. 2008. "Soil, Work, Civilisation, and Citizenship in Kenya." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 2 (2): 305–314.
- Lynch, G. 2006. "Negotiating Ethnicity: Identity Politics in Contemporary Kenya." *Review of African Political Economy* 33 (107): 49–65.
- Mamdani, M. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Kampala: Fountain.
- Markakis, J. 2011. *Ethiopia. The Last Two Frontiers*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Mazrui, A. 1997. *Kayas of Deprivation, Kayas of Blood: Violence, Ethnicity and the State in Coastal Kenya*. Nairobi: Kenya Human Rights Commission.
- Mazrui, A.-A. 2000. "The Kenya Coast: Between Globalization and Marginalization." In *Kenya Coast Handbook: Culture, Resources, and Development in the East African Littoral*, edited by J. Hoorweg, D. Foeken, and R. A. Obudho, xxi–xxvi. London: Lit Verlag.
- Mbai, O. 2003. "Public Service Accountability and Governance in Kenya since Independence." *African Journal of Political Science* 8 (1): 113–145.
- Meilink, H. 2000. "Kenya Coast in National Perspective." In *Kenya Coast Handbook*, edited by J. Hoorweg, D. Foeken, and R. A. Obudho, 11–26. London: Lit Verlag.
- Mitchell, T. 1999. "Society, Economy and the State Effect." In *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, edited by G. Steinmetz, 76–97. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Muia, D. 2008. "Devolution of Governance to Districts in Kenya: A Case Study." In *Decentralisation and Devolution in Kenya: New Approaches*, edited by T. N. Kibua and G. Mwabu, 199–234. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.
- Mwakimako, H., and J. Willis. 2014. "Islam, Politics and Violence on the Coast." *Observatoire des Enjeux Politiques et Sécuritaires dans la Corne de l'Afrique*, Note 4.
- Ngunyi, M. 1996. "Resuscitating the Majimbo Project: The Politics of Deconstructing the Unitary State in Africa." In *Challenges to the Nation-State in Africa*, edited by A. Olukoshi and L. Laasko, 183–213. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Africa Institute.
- Nyanjom, O. 2011. *Devolution in Kenya's New Constitution*, 1–30. Constitution Working Paper, (4), Society for International Development.
- Olivier de Sardan, J. P. 2008. *A la recherche des normes pratiques de la gouvernance réelle en Afrique* [Searching for Practical Norms of Real Governance in Africa]. Discussion Paper, 5. <http://www.institutionsafrica.org/filestream>.
- Oyugi, W. O. 1983. "Local Government in Kenya: A Case of Institutional Decline." In *Local Government in the Third World: Experience of Decentralisation in Tropical Africa*, edited by P. Mawhood, 107–140. New Jersey, NJ: John Wiley.
- Oyugi, L. N., and T. N. Kibua. 2008. "Planning and Budgeting at the Grassroots Level: The Case of Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plans." In *Decentralisation and Devolution in Kenya: New Approaches*, edited by T. N. Kibua and G. Mwabu, 199–234. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.
- Pankhurst, A. 2008. *Enhancing Understanding of Local Accountability Mechanisms in Ethiopia: Protecting Basic Services Project*. PBS II Preparation Studies, Revised Summary Report, Addis Ababa.
- Panel, S. 2014. "A View of a Bureaucratic Developmental State: Local Governance and Agricultural Extension in Rural Ethiopia." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8 (3): 420–437. doi:10.1080/17531055.2014.922745.

- Stokes, S. C. 2005. "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina." *American Political Science Review* 99 (3): 315–325.
- Stren, R. 1970. "Factional Politics and Central Control in Mombasa, 1960–1969." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 4: 33–56.
- Transparency International Kenya. 2014. *Is It My Business? A National Opinion Poll on Devolution and Governance in Kenya*, 128–154, June 16. Nairobi: Transparency International.
- Widner, J. 1992. *The Rise of a Party-State in Kenya: From 'Harambee' to 'Nyayo'*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Willis, J., and N. Chome. 2014. "Marginalization and Political Participation on the Kenya Coast: The 2014 Elections." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8 (1). doi:10.1080/17531055.2013.844443.
- Willis, J., and G. Gona. 2012. "Pwani C Kenya? Memory, Documents and Secessionist Politics in Coastal Kenya." *African Affairs* 112 (446): 48–71.

Interviews

- Interview 1 with a Member of a County Assembly, Kilifi, May 7, 2014.
- Interview 2 with a Branch Chairman of the Mombasa Republican Council (a group demanding the secession of the coast), Likoni, December 2012.
- Interview 3 with civil society organizer, Kwale, March 1, 2013.
- Interview 4 with a county executive committee member, Mombasa, May 8, 2014.
- Interview 5 Kilifi, May 7 2014, with the head of a county public service.
- Interview 6 Kilifi, May 8, 2014, with two residents of Kilifi County at Mariakani sub- location.
- Interview 7 Kwale, May 11, 2014, with local activist at Likoni.
- Interview 8 Kilifi, May 7, 2014, with an Assistant County Commissioner, Bahari Sub-County, Kilifi Town.
- Interview 9 Mombasa, May 9, 2014, with a former governor aspirant, Mombasa County, Mombasa.
- Interview 10 Kilifi, May 10, 2014, with a former Member of Parliament, governor aspirant, Kilifi County, assistant minister and provincial administrator.
- Mombasa County Assembly Special Session Notes, May 12, 2014.
- Mombasa Gubernatorial Debate, Mombasa, February 2, 2013.