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CHAPTER 1. Political Structures, Processes, and Livelihoods: A Literature Review

How do politics impact livelihoods in peri-urban and rural sub-Saharan Africa?

The literature, for better or worse, is very dense on this question, rendering a full and comprehensive accounting nearly impossible. Contributions have been authored by researchers in public, private, and academic institutions. Within academia alone, authors illuminating the subject hail from all imaginable branches of the social sciences and humanities, including economics, political science, geography, sociology, social and cultural anthropology. The following review attempts to survey the most influential of these, i.e. those which either changed the course of, or spawned, further research. In many cases, the influential contribution might be characterized as a *meta-theory*; or the approach in question, while influential, only implicitly touches upon livelihoods in peri-urban and rural spaces. In either case, efforts have been made to infer and derive a conclusion wherever possible and with minimal reliance on questionable warrants.

This review reaches two conclusions. First, there is surprisingly no agreement as to how politics impact livelihoods in peri-urban and rural spaces. Second, I argue that this disagreement can be reduced to differences in ontological and epistemological points of departure, and that furthermore these points of departure tend to coalesce with the relative impact of international, state, and local institutions. Ontological realists aim for the universality of truths, and in doing so are quick to accept "facts" as given, scarcely sidestepping to consider whether a certain construct warrants more qualification or relativization. Ontological realists therefore tend to hail from political science and economics and are, more often than not, epistemological positivists. Concepts such as "states" and "investment" are borrowed from mainstream usage and rarely questioned, leading such researchers to extrapolate higher structures and systems of causality, such as international markets and politics. On the other end of the ontological spectrum are relativists, for whom concepts such as states and investment are constructs among many. These constructs may change depending on the viewpoint of the observer, and cannot be taken for granted and extrapolated until careful consideration is given to the reliability of definitions. Relativists therefore populate the discipline of anthropology, for whom context and validity are chief

concerns, not to mention reflexivity. States, for instance, mean different things and even operate differently in different contexts and even among different people. Those contexts tend to be smaller agglomerations and localities, where individuals become key sources of evidence. As one anthropologist puts it:

> This, if anything, is what distinguishes the ontological turn from other methodological and theoretical orientations: not the dubious assumption that it enables one to take people and things "more seriously" than others are able or willing to,[1] but the ambition, and ideally the ability, to pass through what we study, rather as when an artist elicits a new form from the affordances her material allows her to set free, releasing shapes and forces that offer access to what may be called the dark side of things.[15]

This review's purpose is to elicit and compare both the brighter and darker sides of things, particularly when it comes to describing and explaining politics in African peri-urban and rural spaces.

1.1 International Explanations and Ontological Realism

Despite more recent interest in the effects of Sino-American competition for resources and allegiance in sub-Saharan Africa, international forces have been somewhat relegated to secondary status as explanatory factors of governance since the end of the Cold War period. This is a rather intuitive development, since the collapse of the Soviet Union left in its wake a uni-polar international structure which yielded relative stability between nations. Within African states, however, instability quickly became the norm and both scholarly and journalistic attention was diverted to intra-governmental and intra-regional struggles. Only recently has Africa again been hurtled towards center-stage as Eastern engagement in the form of mineral exploration and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) continues apace, prompting a re-reading of international political structural theories aimed at explaining underdevelopment, political instability, and conflict. Does international competition for Africa's limited resources and political allegiance exacerbate developmental pitfalls, represented in livelihoods? And which international factors are important and why for the purpose of explaining changes in livelihoods?

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[15] Martin Holbraad, Morten Axel Pedersen, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "The Politics of Ontology: Anthropological Positions," accessed July 21, 2019, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/the-politics-of-ontology-anthropological-positions.

Although International Relations (IR) theory has no shortage of explanations regarding this question, it has as a whole notoriously fallen short of adequate, all-encompassing theories with predictive power for the behaviour of African states. This is due in large measure to adherence to ontological realism,[16] where received notions such as "state" and "system" are scarcely questioned or delineated. This is also doubtless related to the penchant of IR to produce knowledge for the most powerful actors through a top-down approach.[17] Central to the assumptions of most IR theory, for example, is the presupposition of a state with both internal and external sovereignty. Whereas African states largely feature external sovereignty, internal sovereignty is harder to come by. Angola, Sudan, Kenya, and Mali all serve as more recent examples of juridical states with a conspicuous lack of centralized authority where conflict zones are prevalent and betray an egregious center-periphery dualism. No other region is more dependent (or interdependent) vis-à-vis the world's major actors than sub-Saharan Africa, however one chooses to measure it.

Dependency theorists, largely popular for their top-down analyses in the context of the Cold War, are the most outspoken proponents of assigning blame to the international system for Africa's political and development failures.[18] Walter Rodney's work is representative of a general approach which holds Africans passive in the face of Western intervention, itself a product of the logic of international capitalism which, taken to its logical extreme, economically punishes peripheral regions.

Walter Rodney recounts in his seminal work how Europe underdeveloped Africa in general. He defines "underdevelopment" as a condition of lower development relative to other nations,[19] and development is a measure of how well a society organizes itself so as to guarantee the well-being of its inhabitants. It is not limited to purely economic conceptions of the term.[20] This is appropriate since Rodney makes a well-documented argument from a Marxist-historical persuasion that underdevelopment today in Africa, economic or political, derives from political,

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[16] For more on ontological differences in the social sciences, see Berth Danermark, Mats Ekstrom, and Liselotte Jakobsen, *Explaining society: An introduction to critical realism in the social sciences* (Routledge, 2005)

[17] See G. Mohan and B. Lampert, 'Negotiating China: Reinserting African Agency into China–Africa Relations', *African Affairs*, 112 :446 (2013), 92-110; W. Brown and S. Harman (eds.), *African Agency in International Politics.* Vol. 2. (Routledge, 2013).

[18] See A. G. Frank, 'The Development of Underdevelopment', in R. I. Rhodes (ed.), *Imperialism and Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970 [1966]), 4-17; I. Wallerstein (ed.), *The Capitalist World-Economy, Vol. 2,* (Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[19] W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), 14.

[20] Rodney, *How Europe*, 4.

social, and economic domination in the past, and the culprit is the world capitalist system led by Europe.

The pre-colonial and colonial periods saw the intensification of exploitation of African labor and resources to benefit Europe and America. Not only was this carried out with violence and naked force, but the long-term effect was to deprive Africans of autonomous industrial growth which is assumed to be the engine of development. Furthermore, the external orientation of a certain class of African elites helped lead to kleptocratic and neo-patrimonial governments in the future which contributed in large measure to today's African debt. In the seventeenth century leading up to increased involvement in Africa by the European states, the slave trade represented the most egregious form of capitalist penetration and resource extraction. For Rodney, the long-term effects of these processes were clear: They served to deprive Africans of incentives to develop and they provided the circumstances in which African trade became unfavourable to creating consistent African demand for technology relevant to development.[21]

The rapid pace of industrialization in Europe led to mass production as the twentieth century approached. As capital-intensive machines replaced humans, products became cheaper and cheaper, out-competing any African manufactures, most of which was still produced using traditional methods. So began Africa's large-scale import of industrial, mass-produced products. Not only does this drain national coffers, but Africans were deprived of the opportunity to develop critical skills which generate growth in a capitalist economy. Under colonialism, however, this denial of the chance to develop skills and manufacturing amounted to policy, as European states regularly protected their industries through the use of import-tariffs and law.[22] European states were keen on avoiding competition which could not only jeopardize their manufacturing supremacy but could also cause civil unrest in the form of unemployment, thereby jeopardizing the capitalists themselves.

Finally, colonialism, after creating dependence and the sustained transfer of wealth to the metropole, began the practice of lending through metropolitan banks. This created a social pathology where Africans felt that "without those capitalist services no money or European goods

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[21] Rodney, *How Europe*, 106-108.
[22] Rodney, *How Europe*, 231-232.

would be forthcoming and therefore Africa was in debt to its own exploiters."[23]   This state of affairs was perpetuated into what is known as neo-colonialism.

Colonialism, according to Rodney, left a legacy of several dependencies which have caused Africa's debt crises today. African states depend on the West (and now the East) for manufactured products, inducing unfavourable terms of trade. Due to a lack of experience in manufacturing and a lack of skilled labour, African states also depend on Western NGOs for job training and other services, as well as on Western banks and states for loans and aid to resolve short-term crises. Finally, they depend on the export of primary commodities which are notoriously vulnerable to international price fluctuations. Volatile prices prevent long-term financial planning and typically preclude any meaningful investment. In short, African economies are not reaping the benefits of integration into the world economic system. Instead, they occupy the periphery whose primary function is to supply the needs of more advanced industrialized economies.

Rodney's work encapsulates a political-economic perspective with emphasis on structures and world systems in changing livelihoods of Africans, but its broad-brush approach leaves little for an operationalized study. Taking an uneven world system as its starting point, rentier theories focus on one of the most important manifestations of African undevelopment: resource extraction. This study, for reasons detailed in the introduction, proposes to analyze oil rentier states in determining the relative importance of local, state, and international forces for a range of levels of governance and political processes. Oil itself is said to develop and nurture authoritarian regimes, regardless of context or institutional history.   This link between a government's exclusive dependence on natural resources and its poor accountability to the wider citizenry is well-documented, however incomplete in its theoretical development. Hossein Mahdavy[24] sought first to explain why substantial oil revenues had not led to development in Iran despite massive public expenditures by the Shah. Mahdavy concluded that since oil revenues flowing to the Iranian government were essentially rent, or money received by virtue of ownership, it need not generate revenue from citizens which in effect renders bureaucracies unaccountable to public demands. Beblawi and Luciani further developed the postulation of the "rentier state," refining its definition to those states which receive more than 40 percent of their national income from external oil rents

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[23] Rodney, *How Europe*, 236.
[24] H. Mahdavy, 'The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran', in M.A. Cook (ed.), *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford Unversity Press, 1970).

and which accrue to very few hands. The financial autonomy of the state—derived from rents— pre-empts the need for taxation while inflicting on the bureaucratic elite a "rentier mentality," a condition where pecuniary rewards and prosperity are not linked to work. The rentier mentality thus leads to inefficiency and corruption within state bureaucracies, while lack of taxation results in lack of state legitimacy and diminished political accountability, which in turn curbs democratic participation.[25] Subsequent studies have revealed a host of negative economic consequences as well, such as the Dutch Disease[26] and a lack of backward and forward linkages,[27] though their importance to this research is limited to their secondary effects on political variables.

The interest in resource dependency resurfaced after a brief hiatus after the end of the Cold War, mirroring the return to states as primary units of analysis. Richard Auty first coined the expression "resource curse" in an investigation of why parts of the developing world richly endowed with natural resources were simply not developing. Auty cited the Dutch Disease, the capital-intensive nature of mineral operations, and the way governments in developing states deployed their economic rents as reasons for explaining what is otherwise known as "the paradox of plenty," which appears in states which are endowed with plenty of natural resources but which suffer a number of macroeconomic ailments, including slow growth and rampant poverty.[28] Sachs and Warner confirmed this paradox in a subsequent study revealing that countries with high ratios of natural resource exports to GDP suffered relatively slow growth from 1971 to 1989.[29] Due to the fact that these studies were conducted by economists searching for economic phenomena, they largely neglected rentier theory as it is described above. Although Paul Collier and Hoeffler were among the first to tie resource dependency in the Third World to conflict exclusively, few intervening variables other than "greed and grievance" were given as explanatory factors for this relationship.[30] Nevertheless, both approaches, oil rentierism and resource curse theory, can be

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[25] H. Beblawi, 'The Rentier State in the Arab World' in H. Beblawi and G. Luciani (eds.), *The Rentier State* (New York: Croom Helm, 1978), 51.

[26] A. Gelb et. al., *Oil Windfalls: Blessing or Curse?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). The Dutch Disease refers to the negative impact of the growth on one sector, e.g. natural resources, on other sectors of the economy. For example, quick growth in natural resource exports can appreciate currencies, making it harder for non-resource sectors to export and remain competitive. The result may be an overall debasement of the economy.

[27] Frank, *The Development*, 1966.

[28] R.M Auty, *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis*, (London: Routledge, 2003).

[29] J. D. Sachs and A. M. Warner, 'Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth', NBER Working Paper 5398 (1995).

[30] P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War', Policy Research Working Paper 2355, Development Research Group, (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2000).

criticized for assuming unicausal and unifactorial explanations for both political conflict and instability. Perhaps no other part of the world warrants more penetrating investigations of how subnational forces interact with state and international agents to produce unique development outcomes than in sub-Saharan Africa.

The prominence accorded to the state (conditioned by a world system) by rentier theorists Mahdavy, Beblawi and Luciani has since been questioned, especially when applied to Africa where weak states predominate while the negative effects of rentierism, such as poor accountability, are still felt. Among the earlier applications of this political-economic framework based on rentierism to an African context was made by Richard Joseph, who sought to explain the fundamental issues underlying Nigeria's successive political and social crises through the 1980s. Those fundaments included the "shift to a mono-mineral export economy, the socio-economic proclivities of the dominant class, the considerable expansion in the state's economic role, and the distinct pattern of competition for access to public resources *in all sectors of Nigerian society*."[31] Rentierism was also applied to Gabon by Douglas Yates, who argued that African states face a "double-dependency" on both oil and strategic powers, thus exacerbating political variables such as clientelism and low political participation.[32] A newer generation of rentier theorists objected to the "uni-contextual" bent of original rentier theorists, arguing that conflict, corruption, and low accountability in African states cannot be solely explained by oil, a contention of recently branded "resource curse" theorists (e.g. Collier, Le Billon, etc.). Other determining factors such as ethnic cleavages and post-colonial institutions must be explored,[33] as well as the participation of MNCs and "subaltern groups" who compete with those who have captured the state for a piece of the rent.[34] For example, Norway might have fallen prey to the symptoms of a rentier state had it not been for its strong democratic traditions, smart management of oil windfalls, assiduous and progressive taxation, and relative absence of ethnic and class conflict.

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[31] Richard A. Joseph, "Class, State, and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria." (*Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 21, no. 3 (1983): 21-38), 21. italics added

[32] D. Yates, *The Rentier State in Africa: Oil Rent Dependency and Neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon*, (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1996).

[33] U. A. Tar, 'Rentier Politics, Extractive Economies and Conflict in the Global South: Emerging Ramifications and Theoretical Exploration', in K. Omeje (ed.) *Extractive Economies and Conflicts in the Global South* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008) 27-49.

[34] K. Omeje (ed.), *Extractive Economies and Conflicts in the Global South* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008).

Timothy Mitchell, in a groundbreaking study of political power and oil, uses a political-geographic logic (not so dissimilar from that of Le Billon) to argue that the peculiar processes, distribution and workplace institutions of oil extraction—rather than windfall profits exclusively, which tend to be the focus of the studies above—condition both the relative power of its workforce and the industry's geopolitical implications. Unlike coal, which was operated by relatively independent miners, was concentrated in the West, and which necessitated a large and disruptible network of railroads and other activies, oil is a "point" resource extracted with minimal manual labor and is more flexibly and easily distributed. Mitchell suggests that, perhaps by design, the promotion of oil-based combustion was in part an effort to reduce the democratizing potential that coalminers' unions had once wielded. Oil could be extracted and shipped from areas (such as the Middle East) where the lack of democratic institutions or presence of strong oligarchies would aid in silencing worker dissent. In post-war Iraq, for example, the nationalists welcomed the Western cartel because it would obviate the need for a radical redistribution of wealth to lower classes. In places like East and South Asia, however, socialist regimes limited large land holdings and emphasized the growth of a large industrial workforce. Since "democratization has generally depended on engineering such forms of vulnerability," Western involvement in these areas was relatively slim.[35] Mitchell's chief contribution was in weaving together insights from Le Billon, Yates and various other resource realists to both problematize and qualify the relative impact of oil on the global political landscape. According to Mitchell, oil's agency in determining political outcomes has not necessarily been overstated, but misunderstood and simplified; the context of the area of extraction matters. The outcome for local governance, however, is not commented upon in-depth. Lastly, Mitchell's argument makes several assumptions that cannot necessarily be taken at face value: For instance, to what extent was the promotion of oil at the expense of coal not due to overall technical cost-saving? How exactly are Western majors implicated in the foreign policy formulations of their home governments? Are current understandings of democracy limited to the effective ability of an industrial workforce to make political claims?

Lastly, the determinism of the supposed oil curse was also thoroughly problematized by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, who with others refutes simple correlations and argues for

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[35] Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London, Verso, 2013, 292p.): 141

qualitative approaches to the impact of oil dependence.[36] Not only do contradictions to the oil curse abound—in addition to Norway, there is Australia, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom—[37] but the oil-conflict correlation begins to break down depending on the time intervals used.[38] Even between two or more contexts where oil has led to negative outcomes, the precise impacts are often felt differently.[39] Relatively poor states with fragile institutions and authoritarian dispositions merely *tend* to be more susceptible to the political curse when oil is then extracted.[40] Lastly, lengthy experience with oil production may result in marginal institutional improvements, especially after oil rents have managed to stabilize otherwise fragile regimes.[41] At the end of the day, poor governance and conflict in rentier states are not predetermined. Only an "ecological" approach that refuses to ignore contexts and factors at the expense of others can potentially, after newly generated theory, account for all cases of success and failure.

1.2 International Explanations and Ontological Relativism

Relativists, in opposition to realists, tend to eschew received notions regarding the international/world system, especially when applied to sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, they recognize and emphasize the impact of the international sphere on political anomie.[42] Both Christopher Clapham and Jean-François Bayart, in writing on African state interaction with the international system, have been critical of one-directional causalities. Reacting to the theoretical missteps of the once-dominant dependency theorists, Bayart confidently dispenses with the notion

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[36] Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, "Oil Curse, State Instability, and Violence in Developing Countries: Theoretical Lessons for Nigeria." (*IFRA-Nigeria Working Paper Series* 32, November 27, 2014).

[37] Christa Brunnschweiler & Erwin Bulte, "The Resource Curse Revisited and Revised : a Tale of Paradoxes and Red Herrings," (*Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* vol.55, n°3, 2008, pp.248-64). ; For an explanation of how oil rents can actually contribute to democracy, see Thad Dunning, *Crude Democracy : Natural Resource Wealth and Political Regimes* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 327p.) ; For a demonstration of how oil can have positive social impacts such as eliminating slavery in Saudi Arabia, see Roger Botte, *Esclavages et Abolitions en Terres d'Islam* (Bruxelles, André Versaille, 2010 389p.).

[38] Stephen Haber & Victor Menaldo, "Do Natural Resources Fuel Authoritarianism? A Reappraisal of the Resource Curse," (*American Political Science Review*, vol. 105 / 1, Feb. 2011, p.1-24).

[39] Jeff Colgan, *Petro-aggression : When Oil Causes War* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 312p.).

[40] Benjamin Smith, *Hard Times in the Lands of Plenty: Oil Politics in Iran and Indonesia* (Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press, 2007).

[41] John Heilbrunn, *Oil, Democracy, and Development in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2014)

[42] "Political anomie" here refers principally to political disaffection produced by lack of trust in a flagging political system. For further explanation, see Sections 1.5 and 2.1 below.

that Africa "passively absorbs the shock of having been made dependent on other parts of the world." Rather, "Africa may have played an active role throughout this long process of a reduction to a state of dependency."[43] As Bayart claims, this does not amount to a rejection of the assertion that a state of dependency prevails in Africa. It rather amounts to a rejection that, per dependency theorists, African elites have had no agency in their own *mise en dépendance.[44]* In this sense, the importance of external agents should not be reduced entirely but "relativized" to consider the fact that Africans themselves, in a struggle to make the best of a dire situation, or just to maximize gains, have had a hand in the long-term entrenchment of dependence. In a sense, they have specialized in it, and have accelerated the process towards the gross inequalities seen today.

How African elites coped with dependence, the specific ways in which they engineered their *mise en dépendance*, was done through strategies of "extraversion," a concept so empowering of African agency in the international system it has become a veritable catchword among Africanists. Elites practice extraversion to capture and accrue rents generated by a state of dependence. An unhealthy dependence on oil, for instance, creates opportunities for those rightly positioned that a healthier economy would not afford. Dependence closes off to the bulk of society opportunities for enrichment and promotion. Extraversion is thus used to exploit things such as religion, democratic discourse, war, opposition, and even foreign aid, which often become ideological and practical diplomatic tools for negotiating personal power vis-à-vis foreign powers.[45] Furthermore, extraversion can be conceived as a uniquely African phenomenon, an assertion which indigenizes the concept and serves to explain differences between Africa and its peripheral counterparts in Asia or Latin America. It has been made possible thanks to homegrown African civilization, which comprises an "oral culture, a rather weak development of productive forces, extensive agriculture and pastoral activity without use of private-title land tenure, a rather limited degree of cultural and social polarization, and a limited degree of economic accumulation and political centralization," the latter of which is present thanks to hyper-dependence.[46] Based on a thorough reading of history, Bayart is able to classify six types of extraversion strategies: coercion, trickery, flight, mediation, and appropriation vs. rejection.[47] The central hypothesis is

[43] J-F. Bayart, "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion," *African Affairs*, 99 (2000), 217-218.
[44] Bayart, *Africa*, 219.
[45] J-F. Bayart, *L'Etat en Afrique: la Politique du Ventre*, (Paris, Fayard, 1989).
[46] Bayart, *Africa*, 231.
[47] Bayart, *Africa*, 231.

that these strategies comprise a uniquely sub-Saharan African mode of adaptation which has contributed to the high degree of dependence witnessed today.

Christopher Clapham borrows Bayart's concept of extraversion to demonstrate that African big men and neo-patrimonial characteristics are partly a result of intense international insecurity vis-à-vis major powers. "Revolutionary as the colonial state was in the African context, it intensified a dependence of political authority on external resources which was already one of the common features of pre-colonial state systems in the continent."[48] Arguing against the idea of failed states, Clapham claims no success had ever even existed in the first place, and that what constituted the mirage of real statehood merely dissipated once superpower intervention was retracted.[49] This view, as opposed to that espoused by Bayart, seems to lend itself more easily to structuralist conceptions of African state behaviour, tying local outcomes to international developments. State agents in this sense do not appear as creative as Bayart's construction of elites exhibiting extraversion. Nevertheless, an interaction is present between local and international levels.

Anthropologists have likewise called into question concepts derived from an international system with received (and often formalized) notions of power relations. A recent school of anthropological research into local adaptation to external shocks is a result of a number of scholars looking to test resource curse theories, the traditional domain of economists, political scientists, and sociologists (see above). In an edited volume by Behrends et al.,[50] Andrea Behrends and Stephen P. Reyna introduce an "anthropology of oil" whose purpose is to test hypotheses explaining why the external shock of vast sums of petrodollars, normally a positive thing in countries endowed with "institutional capacity," have led in many places, most notably Africa, to a set of political and economic degradations. As this volume's focus is on the political effects of the resource curse, the authors present two perspectives on the "paradox of plenty." The first is the rent-seeking/institutional model with frequent reliance on the work of Terry Karl[51] who emphasizes weak neo-colonial political institutions which are made weaker by the nature of rent-seeking. The second concerns the neo-patrimonialism model where petrostates give rise to new

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[48] C. Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 32.

[49] Clapham, *Africa*, 269.

[50] A. Behrends, S. Reyna, and G. Schlee (eds.), *Crude Domination: An Anthropology of Oil. Vol. 9.* (Berghahn books, 2013).

[51] T. L. Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States. Vol. 26.* (Univ of California Press, 1997).

levels of corruption where 1) client enterprises perform poorly because clients lack the qualifications to manage the enterprises (here they cite Yates[52]) and where 2) conflict turns violent.[53] The authors contend that no anthropological explanation has been offered to accompany those above which could "bring to the study of oil concern for human experience, in local settings, in which culture operates." The comparative advantage wielded by anthropologists include "the presentation of the reality of an oil-dominated world from the vantage of everyday, experienced lives" which are "lived in local settings" and "an expertise in discovering the significance of culture in the [resource curse]."[54]

Anthropological approaches to oil in general have grounding in a handful of well-known contributions including Suzana Sawyer's *Crude Chronicles,*[55] Andrew Apter's *the Pan-African Nation*[56] and Fernando Coronil's *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela,*[57] all of which take to heart James Ferguson's critique of James Scott's *Seeing Like a State,*[58] which refutes Scott's "general claims and arguments of broad application"[59] and contests oil enclaves' homogenizing/standardizing effect on local communities. Neither of the works above had, however, engaged resource curse theory directly, preferring instead to touch upon oil as a case of another phenomenon. Behrends and Reyna aim to address the fact that "while all developing petro-states exhibit the curse, some suffer it more than others," therefore "any anthropology of oil needs to explain *both* the struggles for oil rents and the hierarchy of oil's curse."[60] This statement shares the ambition of this thesis, thus implicating many of the volume's contributors who more directly deal with oil as an analytical fact than the anthropologists working on democratization and decentralization.

In this research program, Behrends, Reyna and Watts are noteworthy for the novelty of their conceptualizations and thus deserve mention. Behrends and Reyna put forward a conceptual

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[52] Yates, *The Rentier State*.
[53] Behrends, *Crude*, 6.
[54] ibid.
[55] S. Sawyer, *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador* (Duke University Press, 2004).
[56] A. H. Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[57] F. Coronil, *The magical state: Nature, money, and modernity in Venezuela* (University of Chicago Press, 1997).
[58] Scott, *Seeing*.
[59] Ferguson, *Seeing*, 377.
[60] Behrends, *Crude*, 20.

framework, based on previous work by Reyna, for an anthropology of oil which is "structural" and explains "*why, and how, certain groups regulate other groups and, in so doing, acquire social value, like capital*."[61]   Moving on, "the amounts of value flowing to particular structural levels indicate the degree of domination. When most of the value is accumulated by one or two structural levels, e.g., transnational oil firms and national elites, then such a MOD [mode of domination] is said to tend towards more 'crude domination.'"[62] Extrapolating from this framework, all it takes is to define social value, perhaps done through fieldwork, before embarking on further research which could more precisely produce some structural hierarchy. This hierarchy could then be conceivably compared to those existing elsewhere, offering up a fruitful comparative analysis to follow. Both Behrends and Watts, known for his extensive work on oil politics in the Niger Delta, employ a methodology that takes into consideration local context, culture, and historical factors before drawing any conclusions on oil's effects on socio-political life. Both Watts and Behrends, writing on the Niger Delta and Sudan and Chad respectively, reach the conclusion that a significant level of social disintegration occurs as a result of pre-existing historical contexts which lack the proper institutional arrangements that would have otherwise smoothly absorbed the fallout of oil rent. Carried to its extreme, this disintegration as well as an exacerbation of chronic identity conflicts can and usually does lead to what Watts termed "petro-violence."[63]

Lastly, the developing corpus on the anthropology of oil, what Behrends claimed as "linking the perspective of individuals to larger entities and even global processes without levelling them,"[64] has most recently been enriched by Remadji Hoinathy who conducts an anthropological examination of people and social dynamics following onshore oil extraction in the southern Chadian region of Bero. Hoinathy aligns himself with Berry in investigating agrarian change, though as a result of oil's appropriation of land. Like many before him, Hoinathy finds that Bero suffered a significant "monetization" of its socio-political relations. Once the conditions of access and exploitation of the land changed, the means by which villagers acquired money and sustenance changed, confirming the rent-seeking hypothesis proposed above by Behrends and Reyna.[65]

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[61] Behrends, *Crude,* 21. (author's italics)
[62] Behrends, *Crude*, 22.
[63] Behrends, *Crude.* For more on "petro-violence," see M. J. Watts and I. S. Ibaba, 'Turbulent Oil: Conflict and Insecurity in the Niger Delta', *African Security* (4.1.2011).
[64] Behrends, *Crude*, 83.
[65] R. Hoinathy, *Pétrole et Changement Social au Tchad: Rente Pétrolière et Monétisation des Relations Economiques et Sociales Dans la Zone Pétrolière de Doba* (Karthala Editions, 2013).

1.3 Local Explanations and Ontological Realism

The political impact on peri-urban and rural livelihoods is often held to be self-inflicted, that is through one or several cultural attributes extending indeterminately into the past, but which prove relatively deterministic. Local governance and its impact on the citizenry are less likely to respond to international structures, and are more likely to evolve according to an endogenous logic. Because the following authors lean towards "realism" on an ontological spectrum, characterizations are treated as established fact, capable of being easily operationalized in a scientific study. The belief that generalizable conclusions can be reached unites them all. As with international perspectives, proponents of this view range from political scientists to anthropologists, and are more often than not associated with area studies. The task of this section is to identify the relevant characterizations of these innately African institutions in the literature and review the purported connections to contemporary institutions.

While those focusing on exclusively local institutions as factors in governance and livelihoods do so at the expense of ignoring state and international factors, over-emphasis on states as the critical agents of African governance at local levels commits the same error of obfuscation. States, in the Weberian sense, are political units whose overseers exercise monopolies of political and administrative force. In sub-Saharan Africa, of course, state formation was not conducted endogenously but exogenously due to the European colonial scramble of the late nineteenth century, creating borders that represent little more than diplomatic sleights of hand. To speak of state institutions in Africa, as Bratton and van de Walle[66] do, is to speak not of indigenous institutions prior to colonization but of more or less constructed institutions.

States were nevertheless accorded prominence as independent variables throughout the 20th century as decolonization proceeded apace. In addition, the end of international political polarity during the Cold War hastened the turn in the literature towards states as agents of chaos and confusion as superpower sponsorship was gradually withdrawn. The state-society approach undertaken by Mamdani[67] and even Badie's imported state hypothesis[68] may be useful for

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[66] M. Bratton and N. van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambrdige: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[67] M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* (Princeton, 1996).

[68] B. Badie, *The Imported State: The Westernization of Political Order (Mestizo Spaces/Espaces Metisses)* (Stanford University Press, 2000).

analyzing states where institutions are so entrenched as to more closely resemble a Weberian ideal. The "imported state" hypothesis, a prominent component of post-colonial theory,[69] argues that former colonies adopt their predecessors' modes of governance and thus face lower economic development than those states which altered their institutions to conform to the realities of geographic and other social conditions. Bertrand Badie's theory differs considerably from dependency analyses in that the continuing external involvement of former colonizers is not neglected but subsumed as a consequence of weak institutions susceptible to foreign penetration.

More often than not, analysts of "failed states" have difficulties avoiding the omni-present descriptor "neo-patrimonial," a term used not only to describe the state of African politics but also to explain the continent's persistent lapses in stability, legitimacy, and accountability. The word "patrimonial" was first used in this sense by Max Weber who had attempted to explain why China at the turn of the 19th century had failed to reach levels of socioeconomic development seen in Europe. He reasoned that China's patrimonial system whereby patrons, or elites, exercise personal and arbitrary power was more prone to instability and revolution than other, more "rational-legal" systems, thus impeding socioeconomic development.[70] Although African systems have differed substantially from their Asian counterparts past and present, patrimonialism has been applied to pre-colonial systems in sub-Saharan Africa and used to explain the region's relative socioeconomic setbacks.

These analyses, however, tend to ignore the cataclysmic changes undergone during and after the scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century, which had the effect of superimposing on these indigenous patrimonial institutions the mere architecture of rational-legal bureaucracy. Jean-François Médard therefore coined the term "neo-patrimonialism" to describe these hybrid systems and explain how the dual rational-legal and patrimonial logics co-exist, compete, and interact to effect the poor governance outcomes we see today.[71] Médard's seminal work spawned a wide-ranging sub-literature which sought to properly characterize the processual outcomes of neo-patrimonial societies most responsible for Africa's socioeconomic and political woes. While Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith sought to distinguish politics and administration, claiming

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[69] Badie, *The Imported State.*

[70] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York, Routledge, 2001 [1930]).

[71] J-F. Médard, 'The Underdeveloped State in Tropical Africa: Political Clientelism or Neo-patrimonialism', *Private Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientelism in the Modern State* (London: Frances Pinter, 1982), 162.

"clientelism" was a feature of the former and "patrimonialism" only of the latter,[72] Erdmann and Engel countered that the essence of clientelism was ruler-subject asymmetry and thus could be conceptualized together with patronage.[73] Richard Joseph added that patrimonial societies are susceptible to "prebendalism," where prebends, or unofficial benefits derived from the holding of office are used to maintain political clients.[74] The paradigm of neo-patrimonialism is also closely associated with corruption and rent-seeking, which will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Perhaps the most thorough and widely diffused attempt to relate neo-patrimonialism to a relative lack of democracy was made by Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle who, in their own words, began by asking "whether regime transitions in sub-Saharan Africa resemble the democratization [seen in] other parts of the world."[75] Referring to the post-war period from the 1940s to the end of the Cold War in the 1980s, it became clear that African liberation from former colonizers would not mean large-scale political liberalization for most Africans. Rather, "the institutional heritage of neopatrimonial rule has shaped regime transitions in much of Africa,"[76] which have scarcely been in the direction of democratic institutions. Bratton and van de Walle theorize that three informal institutions—presidentialism, clientelism, and the ubiquitous use of state resources for legitimation—are indicative or causative of the lack of democracy in Africa. The authors appropriate Robert Dahl's well-known definition of democracy as both political representation and political participation in order to vary the patrimonial regimes which make up their independent variables. They then find in their own study that these variations produced different governance outcomes, whereas international forces were merely found to constitute the "conditions under which political change became possible."[77]

Two issues arise when attempting to infer from this study. First, the three aforementioned informal institutions meant to serve as factors of governance are, in a sense, already characterizations of governance. Clientelism, for instance, must necessarily exclude political participants and damage representation through the opaque nature of clientelistic relationships.

[72] D. W. Brinkerhoff and A. A. Goldsmith, 'Promoting the Sustainability of Development Institutions: A Framework for Strategy', *World Development*, 20:3 (1992), 369-383.

[73] G. Erdmann and U. Engel, *Neopatrimonialism Revisited: Beyond a Catch-all Concept* (2006).

[74] R. A. Joseph, *Class, State, and Prebendal Politics.*

[75] Bratton, *Democratic*, 61.

[76] Bratton, *Democratic*, 269.

[77] Bratton, *Democratic*, 272.

Asserting that clientelism leads to a lack of democracy therefore risks both tautology and the serviceability of the findings to NGOs and other supposed architects of better governance. It is also unclear that the three informal institutions—presidentialism, clientelism, and the ubiquitous use of state resources for legitimation—are linked in any way to indigenous modes of political organizing delinked from universal or Western norms. Second, the conception of international forces in this study was rather limited, as it included only 1) the cross-border sharing of ideas and 2) the political conditions imposed by international donors and lenders.[78] No mention is made of the consequences of international competition for African resources, the consensus primary cause of foreign interaction with Africans among many scholars.

A growing body of literature by political scientists studying Africa has since elected to focus on informal, indigenous institutions as more appropriate than formal institutions or international forces in explaining regime change and governance in Africa. Legitimacy in Africa comes from the ability to command not territory but people. It follows that "big men" are recognized for their ability to use their offices for the material benefit of their respective clans, ethnicities, or other sub-national groupings to which they belong. Hyden captures this arrangement through conceptualizing an "economy of affection," a sphere of exchanges that take place between the poles of morality and law. In this space, informal institutions abound. He argues convincingly that power dynamics in Africa are not to be found in formal institutions but in the informal institutions that predominate within the economy of affection, which is neither capitalism nor socialism but an entity in and of itself. He also offers a useful typology of informal institutions on the continent. Depending on the politico-historical development of each state, which is excluded from this typology, states exhibit one of four species of informal institutions: clientelism (due to closed and vertical reciprocal relations), pooling (due to closed but lateral relations), charisma (due to open and vertical relations), and self-defense (due to open and lateral relations).[79] Theoretical justification for this typology comes from a range of Africanist literature such as that touching upon geography[80] and the frequency and duration of contact with other social units over time.[81]

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[78] Bratton, *Democratic*, 181-182.

[79] G. Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[80] J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

[81] P. Hoon, 'The Verticalization of Personal-Reciprocal Relationships: Changes in the Local Political Economy of Eastern Zambia', *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association* (Boston, August 2002).

The approaches above, whilst providing key insights towards distinguishing African political systems from their counterparts throughout the world, are susceptible to critique. Although Bratton, van de Walle, and Hyden dismiss international forces as relatively insignificant factors of poor governance in Africa, the institutions they seek to describe are explicitly products of change and adaptation— and the extent to which this change is due to international forces is the object of this thesis, the methodology of which is outlined below. The term "neo-patrimonial" seeks to characterize the state of institutions in Africa after the variegated absorption of European-style bureaucracy into traditional patrimonial systems. The suggestion that these systems ceased to evolve due to external influences once they adapted to colonial contexts remains a highly contentious one. A proper extension of the interplay between "indigenous" continuity and external forces, whether they be political or market-based in nature, necessitates a re-examination of what constitutes those forces in the 21st century and how they are changing things from the ground up. Secondly, the authors above, while seeking to characterize *indigenous* African institutions, focus on *states* as their units of analysis, which have been unmistakably products of international forces interacting with local institutions. Many authors below, persuaded by a relativistic ontology, would even go as far as to relegate states to the imaginary, not to mention a monolithic unit of consequence. Thirdly, and with respect to Bratton and van de Walle's study only, local institutions are varied according to similar descriptors and definitions used to vary the products of those institutions, namely Dahl's formulation of democratic governance. This creates the risk of tautology, and an improved study might aim to de-link the conceptualization of indigenous institutions from what one wants to measure (governance). Only then can one determine which institutions, if at all, are predisposed to democratic outcomes.

Coming from a political science perspective, Catherine Boone aims to address these concerns, and laments what she considers an unwarranted preoccupation with the state-led governance outcomes as a factor of despotic rule in the hinterland.[82] Juridical state institutions are constituted by their constituents, meaning local communities can and do in fact vary for several historical-institutional reasons. Otherwise, "Why would the strategies of an ideologically charged regime like Kwame Nkrumah's vary across regions *within* Ghana?"[83] Boone takes issue with

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[82] C. Boone, *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[83] Boone, *Political*, 15.

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theories and paradigms using the state as a starting point in institutional analysis, including those of Mamdani[84] and Miles,[85] and opts instead to create an "endogenous model of institutional choice" with the help of several anthropological studies[86], one which, like the newer generation of rentier theories, works towards a "systematic conceptualization of the strategic contexts [which] can help resolve these [theoretical] problems".[87]

Boone chooses to classify local community institutions based on the degree to which local elites were dependent on the state at the outset of the study, an approach with solid grounding in political science literature and referred to as the study of agrarian property relations.[88] The more dependent local elites are on state apparatuses for their privilege, the more power states are able to wield over them. At first this seems to presuppose the existence of elites in local communities which may be absent in some regions, but the formulation allows for more flexibility since the theory states that the lack of a social hierarchy, or the weakness of elites, predisposes local communities to the whims of state regimes. Boone along with the authors above argues that either dispersed or concentrated control over persons and resources leads to either less or more political clout with the state respectively and in the form of bargaining power. Dispersion or concentration in turn depends on a host of factors, such as the elites' reliance on the market to extract surplus from the local populace, "ecological constraints, differences in geographic scope and salience of political organizations pre-existing or external to the modern state, impact of colonial rule, uneven commercialization of agriculture, and the extent of class formation."[89] The extent of local elite dependence on the state is therefore a function of social hierarchy at the local level as well as of the economic independence of local elites.

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[84] Mamdani, *Citizen.*

[85] W. F. Miles, *Hausaland Divided: Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

[86] H. L. Moore, 'The Changing Nature of Anthropological Knowledge', *The Future of Anthropological Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-15; J. C. Scott, 'The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Subsistence and rebellion in Southeast Asia', (New Haven, *Yale UP,* 1976).

[87] Boone, *Political,* 16.

[88] Moore, *The changing nature* ; C. Tilly, 'Reflections on the History of European State-making', *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (1975), 3-83; C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); J. M Paige, 'Land Reform and Agrarian Revolution in El Salvador: Comment on Seligson and Diskin', *Latin American Research Review* (1996), 127-139; R. Brenner, 'The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism', *Past and Present* (1982), 16-113.

[89] Boone, *Political*, 23-24.

To test her theory that "[state] regimes… pursued institution-building strategies that were designed in response to situations they confronted on the ground,"[90] Boone borrows a classification of state institution-building from Cohen and Peterson which argues that the state core and its constituent periphery are linked along two dimensions: the "spatial" dimension and the "processual" dimension. Within the spatial dimension, states can either decide to concentrate their administrative presence or pursue "deconcentration."[91] As for the processual dimension, states may choose to centralize their operations, that is bestow more power in single officers, or devolution, its opposite. Specific combinations of the four strategies produce unique "institutional configurations" as conceived by Boone.[92] If rulers chose configurations which were predictable according to the communal structures with which they had to deal, for example if a state ruler or regime "chose" to pursue a highly centralized and concentrated regime to guarantee lasting control because local elites were economically dependent and socially weak, Boone's theory is corroborated. In several comparative studies of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal, Boone uses "process tracing" to construct a historical narrative linking state institution-building strategies to regional and local changes, and found that local and regional changes per the aforementioned factors of elite dependence were said to prompt changes in state institution-building strategies. This finding partially confirms the idea which has often been repeated elsewhere, that "public authority becomes the amalgamated result of the exercise of power by a variety of local institutions, conjugated with the *idea* of the state. Hence the practice of governance varies from place to place, and even from field to field."[93]

1.4 Local Explanations and Ontological Relativism

Political scientists and other realists writing on Africa are beneficial in providing general theoretical understanding, or starting points, to analyses of who governs in sub-Saharan Africa, but while strong in theoretical development, they remain considerably weak in conceptual validity

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[90] Boone, *Political*, 33-34.
[91] J. M Cohen, S. B. Peterson, *Administrative Decentralization: Strategies for Developing Countries* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1999).
[92] Boone, *Political*, 32.
[93] C. Lund, 'Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa', *Development and Change* (37:4 (2006), 685-705).

and empirical justification for their broad-brush hypotheses. Others, notably anthropologists and political scientists of a like bent, contend that only a bottom-up, inductive reasoning can accurately characterize power relations on a continent boasting over a billion inhabitants, thousands of languages, and varying forms of local authority and ways of granting and recognizing political legitimacy. Real knowledge of sub-Saharan African political systems is elusive, and the search thereof must be made with caution and an open mind.

Departure from this recognition of diversity has led to failed policies attempting to deliver aid or other development initiatives to local communities, and thus most authors have reacted by advocating ethnographic approaches to understanding local socio-political relations. Another group of authors, who may also be considered as contributing to the literature on development, have reacted instead to the continent-wide thrust towards decentralization following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the widespread imposition of IMF loan conditionality. Most consider these initiatives a failure for the same reasons that aid-backed development initiatives have failed, and that is because at some point an appreciation of "the grain" (see below) had not been properly assumed. If development and decentralization have been two central themes in African politics since independence, it would be remiss to ignore the latest driver and factor of political dynamics on the continent: natural resources, and most importantly oil. This third group engages resource curse theory, described in detail below, yet through an anthropological lens whereas typical resource curse studies were conducted first by economists and later by political scientists. In an analysis to follow, it will be shown that a natural extension of recent developments in this literature is a comparative approach utilizing ethnographic and monographic methods which might eventually arrive at generalizations more useful to development practitioners than those currently in operation. There is as yet no attempt to apply such a comparative approach to oil-bearing communities in particular, although steps have been taken to do so in development in particular.

For most of their livelihoods, independent African states have been developmental states, that is operating in political spaces where the paradigm of development has reconfigured actor preferences and interactions due both to reliance on foreign aid and the discourse on development. More shocking than how effectively state and local elites have appropriated "development" for their own political needs is how utterly the developmentalist state with its international backers[94]

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[94] Goran Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*. (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

has failed to convey economic and social gains on the ground. From what is nominally known as the era of the "developmentalist" state following independence to today, African states in many respects have even backtracked on earlier progress. It is no surprise, then, that much literature in academia has asked why. The contribution of anthropology, in this regard, seems to have been overlooked, perhaps due to the inherently weak operationalization of anthropological findings.

The list of anthropologists attempting to explain patterns of development and cultural change in Africa is long. Though the earlier ethnographies by cultural anthropologists had not expressly sought to explain "development" per se, their collective focus on how and why societies, and sub-cultures, transition speaks to political change as well. Here the contributions of Bronislaw Malinowski are so seminal as to perhaps be considered the foundations for understanding and documenting patters of cultural change. Malinowski's methods in the early twentieth century relied on extensive use of fieldwork,[95] and many scholars credit these works with establishing such now-recognized concepts as normal deviation and institutions, concepts employed to undermine older Durkheimian notions of structure which fail to describe such change.[96]

Despite Malinowski's insistence on the appreciation of diversity and the dismissal of all claims to cultural determinism, many anthropologists and sociologists have since conducted fieldwork with the aim of finding institutional patterns across the African continent. In this regard the work of Jan Vansina stands prominent. Vansina has been prolific in defending the contributions of political traditions in Equatorial Africa to post-colonial practices, having been among the first to classify pre-colonial African political kingdoms in the modern era while using differentiating criteria such as the degree of centralized control and the principle of political succession in each society.[97] Joining others in an attack on modernization theory and perhaps the democratization paradigm, Vansina later argues that these prior kingdoms (read political institutions) may be traceable to contemporary ways of doing things if "cognitive realities" have not ceased to predict "physical realities." Because traditions exist in the mind of the beholder, the

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[95] Bronislaw Malinowski, "Practical Anthropology." (Africa 2.01 (1929): 22-38.); Bronislaw Malinowski. "Introductory Essay on the Anthropology of Changing African Cultures." (1938); Bronislaw Malinowski. *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An inquiry Into Race Relations in Africa.* (Ed. Phyllis Mary Kaberry. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

[96] George Peter Murdock, "Review: Latin America: The Folk Culture of Yucatan. Robert Redfield." (American Anthropologist 45, no. 1 (1943): 133-136).

[97] Jan Vansina, "A Comparison of African Kingdoms." (Africa 32, no. 4 (1962): 324-335); Evans-Pritchard E.E. and Fortes, Meyer, eds. *African Political Systems*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

people who carry them "must have the power of self-determination" and the tradition will not necessarily die until "its carriers abandon its fundamental principles to adopt those of another tradition."[98]   Vansina's search for institutional patterns common to many Equatorial political agglomerations represents a branch of political anthropology devoted to arriving at useful generalizations.[99] Vansina's focus on finding cross-continent institutional patterns is also shared by authors focusing on development concerns exclusively, and here Chabal and Daloz have been most prolific.[100]

Many anthropologists consider, however, that the authors above have lost touch with the central thrust of ethnography, which is not to find structure but rather to break it down and discover difference and diversity. To this extent, there has been a recent revival of Malinowski's earlier work by those engaged in explaining the failure of development programs administered by centralized bureaucracies. Unsurprisingly, the argument is that centralized initiatives fail to capture realities of social and power dynamics on the ground, and these relations need to be sufficiently studied in order to achieve right policy fit. Implicit in this refocus on indigenous characteristics are relations between local and state institutions, a line of research which has largely remained in the form of monographs despite the limited, but important, contributions employing the comparative method. Whether authors submit monographs or comparative ethnographies, those contributing to the self-designated Africa Power and Politics Program (APPP) research consortium advocate only that researchers place an emphasis on local differences so that states are better equipped in their development programs to "work with the grain." According to Booth, "the 'working with the grain' metaphor is helpful in so far as it places a question-mark over the false universality of the good-governance agenda and commits the APPP to exploring institutional forms that might have better results by virtue of being better anchored in local social realities."[101]

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[98] Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (University of Wisconsin Pres, 1990), 257-260.

[99] See Richard E Lonsdale, "The Decline in Foreign-Area Specialization in Geography Doctoral Work." (*Journal of Geography* 85.1 (1986): 4-6) ; John Lonsdale, Preben Kaarsholm, and Jan Hultin, "Invention and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism." (1994) ; Michael Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

[100] Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, "Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument (African issues)" (1999) ; Patrick Chabal, and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Culture Troubles: Politics and the Interpretation of Meaning*. (C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2006).

[101] David Booth, "Elites, Governance and the Public Interest in Africa: Working With the Grain." *The Role of Elites in Economic Development* (2009), 11.

Spearheading the movement to revive Malinowski's ethnographic methods are two contributors to APPP, Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan and Thomas Bierschenk, who are concerned not only with centralized development in general but base their analyses on impact studies of decentralization policies in the 1990s in particular. Studies by these authors, it should be noted, follow a very important investigation by Sara Berry of social and political change at the local level as a result of state-imposed agriculture policies, whose influence extends to like monographs leading up to the present.[102] In a study of local community governance in the Central African Republic, Olivier de Sardan and Bierschenk set out to characterize "public spaces" at the local level and, more specifically, determine the real impact of decentralizing policies on the villages in question.[103] In the spirit of Vansina's rejection of a "one-way model",[104] the authors not only dismiss one-size-fits-all solutions, but allege that in most African states, the state is hardly present in rural localities, rearing its head only to make infrequent and symbolic gestures of its existence. Therefore, formal interactions and formal structures are not the places to look for local authority structures. Instead, and in line with most political scientists writing on Africa, informal networks are what needs documenting for the purposes of more efficient delivery of goods from both the international and state levels. In conclusion, the authors state that the imposition of formal democratic features like municipal councils would do nothing for balanced socio-economic development or an extension of rights to peasants, since informal relations like matrimonial relations determine the distribution of resources rather than a few ordinances handed down by a distant state. Local power, in essence, doesn't mean better governance. Finally, "it is essential in our opinion that the implementation of these policies [what they call earlier "pressures exerted by financial donors"] be subject to socio-anthropological analysis. All monitoring of decentralisation in Africa ought to include a comparative assessment of its impact on different local political configurations."[105]

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[102] Sara Berry, *No Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (University of Wisconsin Pres, 1993).

[103] Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, *Les Pouvoirs au Village: le Bénin Rural Entre Démocratisation et Décentralisation* (1998).

[104] Vansina, *Paths*, 254-255. Vansina partially concludes that "Economic development did not automatically trigger the appearance of larger-scale political societies," but rather that the equatorial forest led to several kinds of political formation. "Any one-way model," she adds, "of this constant, dynamic, and complex ecological interrelationship oversimplifies the picture."

[105] Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, *Les Pouvoirs*, 468.

Informality, state absence, and the persistence of local power arrangements clearly remained a theme as Olivier de Sardan and Bierschenk extended their approach to a more complete study of *les arènes locales* (public spaces) in contemporary Benin. In *Les pouvoirs au Village*, the authors tackle what they consider to be deficiencies in much of the literature on power structures in Africa in general.[106] While ethnologists had tended to focus solely on traditional power represented by chiefs, youth systems, pastoral and agrarian structures, sociologists had tended to analyze these structures through the lens of democratization. In the Francophone and mainstream political science literature, local authority dynamics are often generalized but betray a notable lack of empirical investigation. Finally, cutting through all these disciplines commenting on a supposed political reality of African politics is a marked lack of historical depth. The way forward, then, would be a shift from ahistorical cultural theses and generalizations towards an approach which is both ethnographic and historical at the same time in order to discover "modes of local governance." In the final analysis, this approach will yield a mapping out of the "micro-variability" which characterizes African political systems and which, according to the authors, predisposes states to favor relative autonomy for local political arenas.[107]

In true anthropological fashion, the authors approached the composite cases of Béninois villages not with pre-conceived or well-developed theories but instead with a methodology that emphasized examining all factors of change at the local political level, from pre-colonial and colonial inheritance to modes developed shortly after independence. This methodology entrained a general characterization of the local "public spaces" which were examined during a time of a hyped-up "democratic renewal" and decentralization taking place in the country from the early 1990s onwards. This characterization of local public spaces was one of institutional (in the sense of the word employed by Malinowski) endurance, detachment, local autonomy, *empilement* and, finally, fragmentation. Local public spaces in rural Benin, which are not well-defined but consist of interactions between several groups including but not limited to traditional chiefs, chiefs associations, agricultural syndicates and boards, young graduate associations and unemployed youth, though fluid in nature, are not susceptible to change induced by state initiatives. Therefore, when Soglo found it politically expedient to curry the favor of traditional chiefs, their limited power within public spaces was not aggrandized, nor was it seriously diminished when Kerekou

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[106] Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, *Les Pouvoirs.*
[107] ibid., 15-20.

stripped them of formal power. Instead, powerful groups emerge and stick around following certain national phases, resulting in a process of *empilement* where no actors are entirely replaced or seriously challenged but are simply piled one on top of the other, resulting in what the authors call "sedimentation" of local public spaces. The absence of the state, except in many cases involving land disputes, means that there is in fact no central authority rural denizens recognize as hegemonic. In some cases of conflict, local representatives of the state are solicited, or the gendarmerie is solicited in some cases of theft, or the sous-prefecture is called upon to adjudicate the succession of chiefs. However, with most other issues, the state plays no role. Instead, institutions are piled on top of one another, creating multiple and overlapping competencies. In this way, local power relations appropriate national changes for their own needs, and local actors become "consumerist" and engage in "institution shopping," a term reminiscent of "forum shopping" in which parties to a court case seek venues which they feel would reach the most favorable outcome, an activity made possible by concurrent jurisdiction in federated states. It is worth noting that this conception is not far removed from conceptions advanced by certain political scientists such as Hyden and Boone, who in some cases acknowledge similarities between state-society relations in Africa and the United States, where local actors are adept at finding forums most conducive to a favorable outcome in their particular dispute.

The difference between the United States and Benin, however, is palpable in the level of Weberian formalization of power relations. Whereas *empilement* rightly characterizes the institutional structural organization at the local level and maintains a certain fluidity, in part due to oral culture, the *process* of social and power relations had remained relatively informal. The process of power relations in Beninois villages refers to matrimonial relations, and the deciders in a number of local organizations tend to be related in some way or another.[108]

In short, the "autonomie partielle" of local political arenas means that national history leaves its mark but that great events at the national level are anchored in specific contexts which color, transform and reorganise these events.[109] Nevertheless, and true to their contention that it is too early to make any generalization for the entire continent, these claims remain specific to villages in Benin, and it is left to subsequent authors to forge ahead with the process of locating continent-wide patterns of local institutional change. A retreat of the state may lead to *empilement*

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[108] ibid., 38.
[109] ibid., 36.

in Benin, but other forms of adaptation in rural areas where, perhaps, matrimonial relations are not as strong, might lead to conflict and forms of local centralization of powers.[110] This work is important for helping to advance an open-ended methodology and for its lack of pre-conceived notions of power dynamics which hold that the state is more determinant of institutional change at the local level.

This more "open-ended and ecumenical" approach has since been revived by a number of scholars, most notably by Ben Jones who set out to assess the state-led decentralizing reforms of Uganda from the 1990s through to the present. Jones joins Olivier de Sardan, Bierschenk and Berry in lamenting "state-centric" approaches by both policy-makers in multi-lateral institutions and by academics where "any manifestation of social change is regarded as a reflection of that category of [state] policy or legislation being studied. Research is guided by the assumption that the state is the most important driver of development and change in society."[111] Rather, a more appropriate rendering of social change would fall between this latter extreme and Hyden, whose economy of affection at the local level serves as the derivation of larger political systems. Jones cites Berry as instructive here who takes a middle route through the previous two poles of the literature on the relevance of the state in local institutional change. Berry claims the state is both weak in institutional terms and an object of political competition due to its control of land and property. Perhaps informing Olivier de Sardan and Bierschenk, Berry prefers to discuss how clans, family networks, and local associations constitute and shape the political space through an analysis of the way state agricultural policies really impacted peasant communities.

In Jones' monograph, the village of Oledai is introduced as one that falls outside the typical Ugandan success story of state-initiated decentralized development, thus hinting at a state-society characterization rather than a state-centered one. At first glance, Jones' account of how Oledai absorbed state-level changes appears atypical, even unorthodox. In arguing that "externally funded community projects had a short lifespan in the Teso region [which includes Oledai]" because "they failed to link into people's political or ideological projects," Jones cites as evidence the money spent on burial societies rather than local government programs or even churches. The villagers clearly attached more importance to an institution which for them was perceived as

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[110] Solidarity, for instance, is often upheld through the assistance assured by extended families, allowing for the absorption of social, political, and economic shocks that may arise during sedimentation (*empilement*).

[111] Ben Jones, *Beyond the State in Rural Uganda*. (Vol. 39. Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 5.

legitimate and not socially contrived. Jones borrows Bayart's concept of extraversion to explain that the development money is derived externally, reinforcing the state apparatus' apathy towards local communities. In other words, and echoing Boone, the state is not dependent on the community for its existence and that is why the development initiatives were carried out haphazardly, without regard for the religious, customary, or social identities of the initiative's subjects. In the region of Teso, a mixture of conflict, the advent of Pentecostalism, and tradition meant that what concerned most people was not the state and its reforms, but securing a proper burial that would allow friends and relatives to live out eternity in peace. Institutionalization and change will therefore not take place in public spaces. "Instead many significant changes belong to logics, structures and practices that have a different provenance. Customary and religious institutions define the parameters for social action. In Oledai, as in much of the world, life is organised around a more disparate set of spaces that nonetheless continue to promise the possibility of change."[112] Thus, the unintended consequence of state-led decentralization was not development for this particular community but an appropriation of funds for what members of the community deemed most important, thus inadvertently contributing to institutions which might even detract from the living standards of the region's denizens. Here, the robustness of the local made itself felt, but it depended on the apathy, and then the ignorance of the state. Does this not invoke some prior structural arrangement as a condition for local resilience in the face of state encroachment? In the case of the Ugandan countryside, it seems that rural areas economically detached from the viability of the state have indeed enjoyed local robustness. But this portrait of separate spheres, of local reality and a state "suspended in midair," may not carry its logic in the context of state-society relations in oil-bearing communities, where the state has every reason not to be apathetic and to entangle itself in local politics.

Indeed, when the state is sufficiently interested in land, much of the literature seems to point to a deterioration of state-society relations as well as a breaking down of traditional power relations at the local level. Fisiy vividly demonstrated this process of traditional demise through an ethnography of customary Fon chieftainship faced with democratizing reforms in the North-West Province of Cameroon. Fisiy shows that the compromised authority and legitimacy of the Fon chieftaincy can be traced to their loss of control over the land, an effect of bureaucratization

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[112] ibid. 165.

at the state level and its elective mechanisms. The interdependence of the Fon chiefs and their people has become eroded "as alternative sources of authority, both internal and external, compete for the regulation of community issues."[113] Since the Fon chiefs, in order to retain a semblance of power, were forced to concede tradition in exchange for the trust of the recently empowered local bureaucrats, the villagers began distrusting the chiefs, signaling a loss of autonomy. It is worth asking the question of whether good governance was satisfied in shifting the power to elected representatives who instituted land reforms, thus stripping the Fon chiefs of their power base, or whether it was harmed in stripping the people of their once-legitimate rulers and granting it to those who are at once more ideologically and physically distanced from their constituents. Another study takes a similar approach to that of Fisiy by analyzing the impact of state-led land reform fueled by the desire to facilitate oil exploitation. Sara Pantuliano, in an article of exceptional thoroughness, describes the coping strategies of the rural Misseriyya pastoralists to the contestation of Sudan's Abyei State's abundant oil reserves. She describes the situation almost in structuralist fashion how the "ecosystem of the Misseriyya can be defined as a non-equilibrium environment, with no long-term balance between populations, available resources and other elements" in which the "Misseriyya livelihood system has been systematically weakened by a series of external shocks" which led to a "process of adaptation."[114] The two main livelihood systems, pastoralism and subsistence farming, were undermined due to frequent interruptions to livestock herding routes stemming from appropriation of land for oil exploitation—the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 redrew regional borders—and conflict as a result of land disputes, leading also to a higher incidence of settlement as opposed to transhumance. Since the advent of oil exploitation in the Muglad basin, Pantuliano reports an intensifying "leadership crisis" involving a "palpable mistrust both of traditional leaders and Misseriyya political leaders" accompanied by social fragmentation. Particular grievances are directed towards the Native Administration for being "excessively politicized and no longer reflecting tribal structures and interests."[115] State-led change thanks to oil exploitation had a measurable effect on governance through inflaming ethnic tensions and extraverting, so to speak, traditional and political leaders. Both ethnographic studies

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[113] Cyprian F. Fisiy, "Chieftaincy in the Modern State: An institution at the crossroads of democratic change." *Paideuma* 41 (1995): 49-62, 51.

[114] Sara Pantuliano, "Oil, Land and Conflict: the Decline of Misseriyya Pastoralism in Sudan 1." *Review of African Political Economy* 37.123 (2010): 7-23, 9.

[115] ibid,. 19.

and broad-based surveys therefore tend to show widespread deterioration in governance standards as a result of transformations in land-tenure systems, particularly those imposed by the state for the purpose of capital penetration.[116] This begs comparison with Jones, who finds in Uganda a different set of state engagement in local affairs which seemingly had had little effect.

The monographs above, lacking in easily-appropriated hypotheses for international organizations looking to deliver aid and advice, demonstrate the need for a comparative approach, which has its basis in works by Evans who in the 1990s began assembling ethnographic works for worldwide comparison. Those studies by Olivier de Sardan and Bierschenk, Jones, and Fisiy would thus be compared to find institutional patterns. Evans' generalizations have been questioned, however, for their insufficient "variation around the African norm"[117] and also for the perceived superficiality of Evans' finding that good governance is the result of "a state bureaucracy's attainment of autonomy from particularistic pressures while remaining or becoming embedded in networks of relationships with private business people."[118]

Without abandoning the latter idea, contributors to the APPP argue that further research should aim to pick up where Evans left off with more studies like those of Olivier de Sardan and Bierschenk in which researchers aim to find out why the particular mix cited above comes about in the first place. In order to have *synergy* between state and society and thus good local governance, the proper mixture of *complementarity* and *embeddedness*, i.e. the division of labour between state and local authorities and the enmeshment of public actors in local social relations, must be present. This, in turn, depends on there being proper *context*, such as history and local traditional organization, and *construction* of social relations.[119] Booth believes the APPP should pick up this line of inquiry and that the proper mix of socio-political conditions will hinge on

• whether the dominant forms of local leadership, at the village level and upwards, derive

their authority from shared concepts of what is right and proper, and not (or not just) from

legal-bureaucratic or electoral mandates;

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[116] See also Yasin Abdalla Eltayeb El Hadary and Franklin Obeng-Odoom, "Conventions, Changes, and Contradictions in Land Governance in Africa: The Story of Land Grabbing in North Sudan and Ghana", *Africa Today* 59, no.2 (2012): 58-78.

[117] Booth, *Working with the Grain*, 21.

[118] ibid. 21.

[119] Evans, Peter. "Government Action, Social Capital and Development: Reviewing the Evidence on Synergy." *World development* 24.6 (1996): 1119-1132.

• whether the local communities are endowed with mechanisms that permit them to discourage free-riding and incentivise cooperation concerning public goods provision;

• [and] the extent to which the prevailing institutions both permit and incentivise technical specialists to apply their expertise to the provision of important public goods.[120]

The research above represents the updated contributions of anthropologists working on governance, and more particularly local governance, in Africa and elsewhere, though it does not capture the entire spectrum of anthropologists working on political dynamics at the local level vis-à-vis external shocks. The literature above has focused mainly on state-society and state-peasant relations typically pursuant to either a decentralizing or democratization program, but democratization is not the only way international forces and state forces intervene in local affairs and touch governance. The exploitation of natural resources, and more particularly oil, of course, has occupied a great number of development scholars through Rentier Theory (see above), and only recently have anthropologists begun to directly engage this body of scholarly work using ethnographic tools. Interestingly enough, there seems to be little to no dialogue between the two anthropological schools of knowledge on local governance in Africa, and this will later be dealt with in detail.

1.5 Describing Livelihoods in Non-Economic Terms

The term "governance" has been wielded haphazardly, not just in this thesis but throughout much political commentary on sub-Saharan Africa. It has also been the catch-all term for desirable social outcomes such as good livelihoods, which is problematic because the concept itself is laden with Western values. In fact, political research on Africa has all but abandoned a valid and potentially fruitful inquiry into whether or not "good" governance actually does lead to improved livelihoods, while the field of economics has by and large dominated discussions of livelihoods (typically represented by macroeconomic accounting, such as GDP or other macro-indexes). The purpose of this section is to problematize governance and arrive at a relativized conception more appropriate to the research design of this thesis.

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[120] Booth, *Working with the Grain*, 25

The progenitor of what has been fashionably called "good governance" is without a doubt intended to be democracy itself, albeit with a minor twist. Literature on democracy has both predated and coincided with that of good governance, since the latter concept was largely invented by Western-backed international organizations. At least in the Western world, building democracy in the newly independent African states became something of an obsessive preoccupation, helping to spur literature on what constitutes democracy, such as Robert Dahl and his foundational definition.[121] Reacting to Schumpeter's "minimalist" approach to what is democratic, Dahl preferred to broaden the definition from "processual" attributes such as free and competitive elections to a "maximalist" one which encompasses the real outcome of those processes. Contestation or competition and participation or inclusion are necessary to have a true democracy.[122] For the purposes of measurement, however, this definition proves inadequate. We need, according to many authors, a notion of democracy which is "sufficiently complex, in its basic dimensions consensual, and empirically well-defined."[123] Only something between minimalist and maximalist approaches could overcome the perennial problems of conceptualization, measurement, and aggregation.[124] Although some find the World Bank's criteria for good governance, which includes concepts like process, capacity, and institutional respect and which relies on expert surveys to measure those with a unique coding system,[125] to be quite valid, some Africanists contend that measures such as the World Bank Governance Indicators may not have validity for many African spaces.

Hyden highlights the difficulty of applying Western notions of good governance to African political spaces. In Africa, the economy of affection makes it difficult to overlay traditional Western dualities like public and private, therefore complicating what is legitimately "good" in an African context. This is also due to "clan politics" and the constituent absence of a ruling class like that found in Europe's constituted states, pre-empting the kind of formalization and rationalization instituted to regulate interactions between classes.[126] Conversely, others argue that

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[121] Robert Dahl, *Poliarchy: Participation and Opposition*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

[122] See Joseph Alois Schumpeter, *Socialism, Capitalism and Democracy*. (Harper and Brothers, 1942).

[123] Dirk Berg-Schlosser, "Indicators of Democracy and Good Governance as Measures of the Quality of Democracy in Africa: A Critical Appraisal." *Acta Politica* 39, no. 3 (2004): 248-278.

[124] ibid.

[125] See Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Pablo Zoido-Lobatón, "Governance Matters." (The World Bank, 1999) ; Kraay, Aart, and Daniel Kaufmann. "Growth Without Governance." (The World Bank, 2002).

[126] Hyden, *African Politics.*

it is exactly the lack of good governance which has resulted in graft and informality. Abrahamsen contends that the good governance discourse creates a false binary pitting alien state intervention against indigenous capitalism in African states. Since Weberian states do not and cannot exist in Africa, they must be dismantled in favor of laissez-faire capitalism. Only then can true economic potential be unleashed. Setting aside the conspiratorial tone alluded to by several Africanists sensitive to guises for capitalist penetration, Abrahamsen then argues for a more careful approach: "Civil society and its relationship to democratisation cannot be understood in abstract terms, but requires instead a specific analysis of the various groups and interests involved in these struggles."[127] That is to say, researchers must discover and take seriously what interest groups want and not transpose, as the World Bank purportedly does, their own conceptions and expectations.

This survey demonstrates that the notion of good governance is therefore highly contested when applied to sub-Saharan Africa. This has consequences for the following research design and requires that governance indicators not be taken at face value, but that locating states and communities with disparate governance entails a close, methodical inspection of what constitutes governance. This is an extremely important task, as changes in governance cannot be detected, and therefore agency cannot be traced, unless a valid and well-informed system of coding governance is put in place.

A better way to achieve the correct balance between maximalist and minimalist approaches, or between objectively applied and subjectively derived measures of governance, is to choose a set of indicators general enough as to be applicable to many cultures and specific enough as to avoid many of pitfalls of maximalist approaches, and then, through extensive fieldwork, to locate the modes of governance and the legitimately recognized forms of authority using ethnographic methods. The World Bank has done a fine job of setting out a broad-based definition of good governance at the level of states, but local governance remains a comparatively understudied area. In this regard, a study by Dele Olowu and James S. Wunsch deserves attention for asking under what conditions "decentralization reforms bring about viable systems of local governance in Africa," local governance being loosely defined as "local systems of collective action that manage a locality's public affairs and are accountable to local residents."[128] What

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[127] Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa.* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 55.

[128] Dele Olowu and James Wunsch, *Local Governance in Africa: The Challenges of Democratic Decentralization.* (Eds. Dele Olowu, and James Stevenson Wunsch. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004.), 1.

distinguishes this work from the overarching corpus of literature on successful decentralization (see above) at large is precisely the authors' problematization and discussion of governance at the local level. The authors found unworkable the World Bank definition of governance which placed disproportionate emphasis on state leaders, as well as another definition which emphasized sharing authority for dispensing public services. Rather, the authors subscribe to what may be termed as an institutional/rational choice-based model[129] which more completely defines local governance as

> a rule-governed process through which residents of a defined area participate in their own governance in limited but locally important matters; are the key decision-makers in determining what their priority concerns are, how they will respond to them, and what and how resources will be raised to deal with those concerns; and are the key decisionmakers in managing and learning from those responses.[130]

Understanding the factors that explain why some states subject to the neo-liberal paradigm underwent more progress to good local governance entails analysing the *process* of local governance as well as *outcomes*, a reflection of the cleavage in the democracy literature above. Certain preconditions must be met for local communities to effectively carry out the work of good governance, such as authority, resources, accountability, effective institutions, and a sound regulatory framework.[131] But whether these are preconditions for sustaining good governance following the transformation wrought by resource exploitation has yet to be considered. Nevertheless, the same impulse that drives this thesis, to better fit state and international policy to variations in local political systems, is present. Aside from structural, or contextual, factors of local governance in African states, the authors identify "indigenous systems" which have also determined the relative success of decentralization programs. These systems include classes such as "community organization," which includes markets governed by women, self-help and

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[129] See e.g. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action.* (Cambridge university press, 1990) and Goran Hyden. "The Study of Governance." *Governance and Politics in Africa* (Lynner Rienner Boulder, Col 1992).

[130] Olowu and Wunsch, *Local Governance*, 4.

[131] ibid., 7.

community improvement organizations, and farmers' unions, and those classed as "traditional rulership," namely chiefs and governing councils at numerous levels.[132] Based on the authors' findings in countries like Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria, these indigenous systems can either enhance the success of local governance as they negotiate state-led changes, or they can ignore their role as "civil-society partner" if they perceive a conflictual relationship.[133]

The approach championed by Oluwu and Wunsch strikes a reasonable balance between objectively applied governance indicators, or minimalist approaches, which bear the risk of imposing one culture's definitions on another, and complete subjective approaches which run the risk of extreme relativism. Like the realists above, however, the effort to define a one-size-fits-all form of governance, whether minimalist or maximalist, commits the realist fallacy detailed above of "putting the cart before the horse" and assuming, first, that at least some elements of governance are applicable to all spaces and, second, that these elements (i.e. "traditional rulership") must always lead to improved social, political, and material outcomes.   In an effort to draw the definition of governance towards minimalism and an appreciation of local characteristics, Oluwu and Wunsch refer often to "indigenous sytems" and the need to discover in each community "a rule-governed process through which residents of a defined area participate in their own governance." In essence, the authors appear to be revisiting a sociological preoccupation with *anomie*.

"Livelihoods" can be characterized in many ways, and are in most cases represented by human development indexes, economic statistics, and, of course, governance indexes. Material comfort is a highly relativized concept, since it is often based on marketed technology whose purpose is not necessarily to better livelihoods. Secondly, Western-conceived indexes are notoriously difficult to measure, and are beyond the capacity of one researcher to fulfill. The best way to take an unbiased stance towards what livelihoods entail is to abandon indexes, statistics, and governance altogether, using an outcome which is applicable across time and space.

The concept of "anomie" is one which has surfaced and re-surfaced since its modern inception in the 19th century by Durkheim, for whom anomie was a breakdown of social regulation

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[132] It should be cautioned, however, that frequent reference to "indigenous systems" and "traditional rulership" perpetuates "otherness," a colonial heritage in an of itself which risks obfuscating historical constructions of inequality. See Peter Pels, "What Has Anthropology Learned from the Anthropology of Colonialism?", *Social Anthropology* 16, no. 3 (2008): 280-299.

[133] Olowu and Wunsch, *Local Governance*, 19-22.

when a society transitioned from mechanic to organic solidarity. The concept was revived by R.K. Merton in 1938, who sought to use anomie to explain the impact of industrialization on Western societies.[134] Merton later defined anomie as "a condition of socioeconomic structures that appears in periods of rapid structural change, when the social systemic processes which reinforce social integration decline in salience and force" while at the same time "the malintegration between social and cultural structures is heightened."[135]

Anomie never rose to the status of hegemony in understanding undesired social outcomes, but it enjoyed another revival in the late 1990s, when Western-backed development programs and aid were largely seen to fail for lack of cultural adaptation. The subject was more notably addressed by a collective publication which sought to describe anomie in several cultural settings. Each study proceeded with the understanding that when periods of accelerated structural change— spurred by an "exogenous process of contact" or an "endogenous dialectic"[136]—outpace growth, "interpretive models" would cease to "enable the altered reality to be understood again and again in meaningful ways."[137] Anomie then leads to "crisis-laden insecurity" among broad swaths of the population. Cultural patterns of interpretation lose their function, social integration within a community breaks down, and valid behavioral norms as well as personal authority disintegrate.[138] Manifesting anomie are "difficulties in individual adaptation," a "loss of general social orientation," "development of feelings of insecurity and marginalization," "uncontrolled rising expectations," "feelings of relative deprivation," and "the questioning of the legitimacy of core social values."[139]

The outcome of a political system's interaction with the society it objectifies, and with which it interfaces, is therefore best represented by the internally accepted modes of interaction which allow that society to function predictably and happily. In sum, the call for more participatory and subjective methods of measuring development in general cannot be ignored,

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[134] Robert K. Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie" *American Sociological Review* 3, no. 5 (1938): 672-682.

[135] Robert K. Merton, "Foreword." In Peter Atteslander, Bettina Gransow, and John Western, eds. *Comparative Anomie Research: Hidden Barriers-Hidden Potential for Social Development*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), XI.

[136] Peter Atteslander. "Introduction." In Peter Atteslander, Bettina Gransow, and John Western, eds. *Comparative Anomie Research: Hidden Barriers-Hidden Potential for Social Development*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 11.

[137] It is worth noting here the parallels with Vansina's notion of "cognitive reality."

[138] Atteslander, *Comparative Anomie*, 9.

[139] Merton, *Foreword*, XV-XVI.

while at the same time the researcher and policy designer must heed the danger of re-producing local policy structures which do not enjoy broad-based legitimate acceptance.