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Alain Dubresson, Sylvy Jaglin

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***Partie I les expériences françaises et sud-africaines dans le mouvement universel de recomposition territoriale***

**Alain DUBRESSON (Université de Paris X) et Sylvie Jaglin (IFU-Paris VIII-LATTS) :**

***Urban Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa.***

***For a geography of regulation***

## **Urban Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa For a Geography of Regulation**

**Alain Dubresson**, Professeur, Université de Paris X, Directeur UR « DevLoc »  
IRD

[alain.dubresson@u-paris10.fr](mailto:alain.dubresson@u-paris10.fr)

**Sylvy Jaglin**, Maître de conférences, IFU-Université ParisVIII, UMR Latts

[jaglin@latts.enpc.fr](mailto:jaglin@latts.enpc.fr)

Abstract. Implementation of governance principles entails intra-urban territorializations in sub-Saharan African cities, which increase the risks of fragmentation and raise the question of local scale regulation in both its political and spatial dimensions.

Key Words: Urban Management, Governance, Regulation, Territory, Segregation, Fragmentation, Sub-Saharan African cities

Résumé. La mise en œuvre des principes de gouvernance provoque des territorialisations intra-urbaines qui accroissent les risques de fragmentation dans les villes africaines et posent la question de la régulation à l’échelle locale dans ses deux dimensions, politique et spatiale.

Mots-clés : Gestion urbaine, gouvernance, régulation, territoire, ségrégation, fragmentation, villes d’Afrique subsaharienne

The local urban governments in sub-Saharan Africa born out of the decentralization reforms implemented since the 1980s are facing a major challenge. Both products and vectors of social change (Dubresson, Raison, 1998), cities are particularly affected by the crisis in politico-economic structures resulting from increasing poverty that “bottom-up” urban dynamics have not managed to curb. Yet, despite a reduction in the demographic growth rate, the African urban population (209 million city-dwellers in 2000) could reach 592 million in 2030.

It is therefore crucial to stimulate localized development policies that are likely in the short term to increase urban value added, reduce poverty, ensure financing of equipment and infrastructures,

and modernize central areas while helping disadvantaged zones catch up. New systems able to take into account the demands of the middle and upper classes as well as the poorest urban populations must also be implemented. Difficult choices often need to be made to reconcile such contradictory objectives at the same time as the liberalization of economies comes with accelerated competition in cities in a changing, poorly stabilized institutional framework with frequently limited financial resources. These choices rely on recomposing local public action that combines the principles of “good governance” and “good government”. Today, considerable work has been done in the fields of political science, sociology, and economics on the genesis, content and theoretical stakes of the concepts of governance and regulation but little of this work takes into account the spatial dimensions of the processes set in motion.

The redistribution of responsibilities also tends to reshape the urban territories for local policies by multiplying perimeters of collective action in function of diverse interests and coalitions. Is this new intra-urban territorialization an adequate response to the growing socio-economic differentiation of city dwellers? Does it make cities marked by segregation and social polarization more governable or does it accentuate fragmented management? Does it favor integration or nurture urban fragmentation?

## **I. Governance and Intra-Urban Territorial Demarcation**

### **1. From Management to Governance: Mixed Reforming Complexes**

At the beginning of the 1980s, decentralization and urban management—defined as the set of mechanisms coordinating technical services and regulation contributing to urban operations, a set of acts aiming to reconcile antagonistic demands and interests that can not be equally satisfied—made up the foundations of new politico-institutional engineering that aimed, through structural adjustment plans, to reform post-colonial States whose nature and operations were considered to hamper development and democracy-building. In addition to providing greater managerial efficiency, these reforms were expected to favor the process of organizing cities as collective political and economic stakeholders and engines for local development and territorialized social policies. Analyzed in relation to the increased efficiency of sectoral public policies and urban

management, decentralizing reforms have until now been disappointing while whole segments of societies escaped all instituted political control and State powers functioned on several registers.

At the end of the 1980s, the notion of governance, understood as the set of processes coordinating stakeholders, social groups, and institutions and aiming to implement collectively negotiated urban projects (Jaglin, 1998-a; McCarney, 1996), imposed itself. Operational recourse to governance, an ancient concept in Anglo-Saxon thought, is not so much an observation of this lack as it is the explicit acknowledgement of systems of stakeholders, resources and processes that, outside the State sphere, *de facto* regulate—and have long regulated—urbanization mechanisms in a large number of African cities where 40 to 70% of the urban population live in illegal settlements and depend on informal jobs.

For donors, and especially the World Bank, one must favor the deployment of diverse stakeholders by reducing the State’s field of direct action as much as possible via diverse privatization and “communitization”<sup>1</sup> schemes and re-focus the State on two strategic functions: regulation and facilitation. Leaving the selection of new partners to market mechanisms, the World Bank is focusing on stabilizing States and improving their functions (World Bank, 1997), emphasizing the (minimalist) conditions to consolidate “good government”.

Real social choices are thus evacuated under cover of “technical” macro-political and macro-economic stabilization measures. The debate on coordination conditions for unsupervised initiatives in institutional urban management schemes is, however, still open. For some, control of this element must remain a matter for the public sphere: governance would then be the result of the way in which government authorities maintain the viability of other social stakeholders, and pilot, manage and negotiate coordination between the latter and their own interests (Swilling, 1997). For others, governance must be more “civilian” and break with the decision-making hegemony of public structures by obliging them to share power (McCarney, 1996). State powers and local urban governments in Africa have steered a delicate course between these two approaches in such a way that the decentralization-privatization-participation triptych and governance principles have been locally re-appropriated and combined according to very diverse formulas resulting in a variety of reform systems. Between the powerful metropolitan governments of South Africa and local branches of central powers in Ethiopia or Togo, local urban governments are characterized by a large range of institutional hybrids.

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<sup>1</sup> Transfer of public sector functions or responsibilities to non-governmental or associative stakeholders.

Nevertheless, the logic behind governance choices favors the more or less coordinated distribution of regulations among diverse public and private (national and international) organizations, NGOs, and various associations. These “arrangements” have multiple consequences. First, they reduce the role of public authorities and urban government *stricto sensu*, often removing the implemented regulations from the electoral control of citizens whose votes sanction a stakeholder that is not always in control. Next, they confine—even community empowerment versions—the direct participation of these same citizens to an operational tool for the exclusive use of disadvantaged city dwellers, which leaves room for doubt as to affirmations linking governance and “community” mobilization. Finally, they contribute to the emergence or accentuation of intra-urban demarcation.

## **2. Spaces for New Arrangements: Territorialization of Urbanized Areas**

Faced with the complexity of tasks, the diversity of objectives and differentiation of clienteles, local urban governments in Africa specialize and spatialize their interventions, which facilitates the search for *ad hoc* cooperative efforts for the benefit of target populations. The trend is to increasingly externalize functions to very diverse partners and via varied arrangements and schemes, notably among urban utilities. Thus, in English-speaking Africa, local municipal governments that are in charge of utilities privilege “privatization” in the form of commercialization or delegation. In the poor neighborhoods of these cities and in cities run by powers that, either *de jure* or *de facto*, have less extensive jurisdiction, “communitarization” (or taking charge of a set of tasks by grassroots communities, NGOs, or even religious missions, sometimes acting for projects associating foreign cities or bilateral aid organizations) is dominant. By thus demarcating urban spaces, these new arrangements contribute to the emergence of intra-urban territories. According to Sack’s analysis (1986, p. 19), we use the concept of “territory” to define an area whose bordering process and control aim to exercise power over a population.

### *a. The Territories of Solvent Clienteles*

Privatization aims to rationalize how utilities are managed and offer improved utilities at advantageous prices for users while reducing local budgets. The question is rarely raised from the

outset in spatial terms. Yet, privatization in East Africa has shown that the main stumbling block for experiments in particular is the issue of generalizing utilities to whole urbanized areas (UNCHS, 1998). The management contracts signed for waste collection bear witness to this. Contract management has turned out to be difficult for local governments who barely live up to their financial obligations; the greatest dissatisfaction, however, comes from the splintering of utilities in function of the spatial distribution of solvent clienteles. Indeed, privatization concerns above all middle- and upper-income neighborhoods, whereas poor and lower-middle income neighborhoods did not receive offers in response to their calls for bids. None of the private companies to which management has been delegated have yet extended utilities to neighborhoods that are not already covered. The gains in utility efficiency were thus made to the benefit of part of the solvent population and the neighborhoods where they live, and to the detriment of the universal nature of the utilities. Of course, universality was not guaranteed under the previous municipal management system but is now given legal and official expression. The question thus remains open as to providing utilities to poor neighborhoods and, above all, integration and social equity.

*b. Secession of the Wealthy: the Gilded Ghettos of the “upper class”*

Privatization is also used as a tool for retrenchment by the well-to-do: in many large cities, private appropriation of roads and public spaces as well as the recourse to personalized security services sets off an admittedly often still modest secession movement. In South African metropolitan areas, it has sometimes been accompanied by the autonomization of utility provision zones for well-to-do clienteles (Heymans, 1991), in a context where the accumulation of late payments in poor neighborhoods reveals a crisis in public collections and the wealthy segment is reluctant to pay for those “lacking civic spirit”. The wide-spread compartmentalization of landscapes, walled housing estates, and carefully protected townhouses sometimes combine with rate and tax disparities to threaten urban solidarity projects (Bénil, 2001; Chipkin, 1999). Do these secessions truly isolate the richest? The current state of knowledge is insufficient to grasp the relationships the inhabitants of these “gilded ghettos” have with their surroundings and the specific nature of their retrenchment. One can, however, admit—with Yves Grafmeyer (1994)—that isolation and integration are not necessarily antinomic for well-off city dwellers.

*c. The Territorial Encapsulation of the Poor*

In the urban areas where “the poor” (a very heterogeneous category) live, interventions also involve increasing territorialization; this is based in part on project approaches that value the neighborhood scale for its supposed virtues of social homogeneity, citizen foothold, and local democracy.

This territorialization is characteristically expressed in the field of utilities, whose operators are confronted daily with commercial and technical difficulties (Lyonnaise des Eaux, 1998). Today, they seek to substitute systems that encapsulate utility provision to the poor for the passive deregulation and informalization that had dominated for the past two decades. These new systems tend to become autonomous according to three principles: territorial and institutional specification of utility provision sectors, technical diversification among schemes, and user mobilization/participation (whether organized or not). This strategy can be applied via the autonomization of specialized organizations in charge of utility provision for the poor, justified by the mobilization of technical systems that are appropriate to diversify the solvent demand by the poor or even, when growing differentiation in utilities becomes long-lasting, by externalizing utility segments via formal or informal delegation isolating types of serviced areas and clienteles with low profitability (Jaglin, 1998-b). Associating a modern integrated utilities with a range of spatialized micro-utilities for disadvantaged populations is thus more and more frequent.

By fragmenting technico-management systems, this poor territory encapsulation practice tends to disqualify transfer mechanisms and, above all, compartmentalize regulation schemes enclosed in local territories where they are left to local, small-scale authorities. The skillfulness of their leaders, mediators, and financial brokers can temporarily mask the deficit when it comes to official regulation, but it rarely suffices to establish a reliable and stable guarantee and appeal system, even on neighborhood level; in addition, due to a lack of arbitration on a satisfactory scale (agglomeration, province), it heightens inter-community competition for access to modest resources.

One of the major challenges is thus measuring the consequences for social cohesion of increasing assimilation between supposedly homogenous clientele segments, utility supply areas, and management territories, which trap economic logic—notably cost recovery—within the narrow



enclosure of poor pseudo-communities and precipitate illegal poor neighborhoods into internal management.

## **II. Stakeholder Systems, Coordination, Dislocation: the Regulation Issue**

Decentralization reforms were above all attempted to liberate cities from the authority of States reputed to be corrupt and bureaucratic. In so doing, they did not for all that consolidate the local urban authorities who often lacked means and skills. To unique authority of the State was added a set of relationships to the private sector, the tertiary national and international non-commercial sector, and international aid networks, within which local governments occupy very diverse positions. By establishing a certain autonomy for local governments, decentralization also gave rise to new forms of subordination and diversified regulatory modes.

In the narrowest sense of the word, as used by Anglo-Saxons and international organizations, regulation sets the legal framework for action and covers supervision rules and procedures set out by government authorities. In France, this term refers rather to the work of regulationist economists working on the long-term adaptation processes of capitalist macro-systems (Boyer, Saillard, 1995). Here, the term is used to designate the (legal, economic, and political) mechanisms used by local urban governments to stabilize antagonisms and ensure the reproduction of a social system. Except for rare cases (Ethiopia, Sudan, and Togo, for example), hegemonic State regulation is lessening and daily management of compromises is often dominated by local regulation based on clientelism and patrimonialism (Jaglin, Dubresson, 1993). What is new is the appearance of a third form of regulation—delegation or discharge (Hibou, 1999)—whose modalities remain variable both in regards to implementation processes and the type of partners solicited. What are the end results on urban segregation of these additions?

### **1. Stakeholder Systems and Intra-Urban Scales: towards Fragmentation?**

#### *a. Segregation and Fragmentation: Two Keys for Interpretation*

The social division of African cities, inherited from colonial policies, results from organized action creating a divided city model and, above all, from apartheid cities. Consecutive spatial

layouts were far from identical everywhere but, beyond the diversity of shapes which is accentuated by the diversity of land tenure systems and the illegality of housing production sectors, cities—especially the largest—were homogenized as tools of colonial administered economies. They were shaped by two dominant logics—exploitation and segregation—long convergent, sometimes inflected, but always meaningful after independence that did not mark rupture. Yet, the crisis in rentier economies and State regulations, the move from Fordism to flexible accumulation, structural adjustment and the State reforms imposed since 1980, growing poverty, and informalization challenge the unity of what previously made up the system in and by segregation.

To understand the process underway, many authors call on the notions of rupture and fragmentation (Vidal, 1997). Multidimensional, the latter combines spatial (physical disassociations, morphological discontinuities), social (residential segregation, community isolation), economic, and above all political components (increasing stakeholder dispersal and autonomization of urban management and regulation schemes: Jaglin, 2001). It is said to be characterized by the dilution of organic ties between parts of the city, the impoverishment of the previous spatial continuum, and repetition of social inequalities at different intra-urban scales, isolated patches of poverty alongside isolates of wealth within an urban kaleidoscope. In recent literature, the dominant idea is that fragmentation reduces the governability of cities and develops new forms of exercise of power. Inversely, do the new management arrangements maintain and reinforce the fragmentation process, notably by privileging forms of co-responsibility that are limited to the timeframes and territories of varied projects?

*b. Political Fragmentation, Selective Coordination, and Micro-Regulations: Divisive Factors*

Management pluralism relies on a growing flexibility in territories of authority, assemblies of stakeholders, and composite resources.

Some relatively closed and selective systems of stakeholders associate representatives of the State administrative apparatus, national and foreign private enterprises, and international donors. Sometimes, local planners whose corporatist interests push them towards this type of alliance are at work in regionally or even internationally competing metropolitan areas (Cape Town, Johannesburg). Carried by influential policy communities with diversified resources, projects privilege the modernization of city centers, urban productivity tools (infrastructure improvement,

management rationalization of urban utilities of international quality, restoration of major equipment such as the large markets in West Africa), vast planning operations (office buildings, commercial malls, hotel complexes, etc.), and peripheral areas where new centralized suburban clusters and high-technology parks appear. It is striking to note how relative State withdrawal is in city centers where real estate stakes and the symbolic dimensions of modernization are rigorously controlled, notably in capital cities.

Often more open systems of stakeholders—associating municipal services, local and national private sector representatives, and outside stakeholders (notably local governments from the North and NGOs) to various degrees—operate in legal residential neighborhoods and the privileged intervention sectors of local governments (land and real estate management, urban utilities, local public equipment). These partnerships are active, excluding housing, in building equipment for local uses (neighborhood markets, schools, care centers, standpipe networks), and sometimes in organizing utilities or segments of municipal services. Accordingly, these schemes reinforce a renewed alliance between local powers and the urban middle classes weakened by the crisis by contributing to improve their environment.

In poor neighborhoods and neglected—either abandoned or overwhelmed—intervention areas the systems of involved stakeholders are very open, sometimes steered by outside agents in the framework of projects, sometimes reduced to the accumulation of local private initiatives. Here, decision-making is highly dispersed, participation is much less selectively filtered, and available resources are unstable: the resulting inequality and compartmentalization of urban micro-territories are also clearly visible.

Geographic analysis of intervention territories and sectoral analysis of the activities thus conducted, which remain very much to be done, would probably show that the dominant forms of local governance increase discontinuity at all scales. One can hypothesize that the more heterogeneous cities are, the less the current systems strengthen unification of territories and urban societies; politico-management division amplifies fragmentation by delivering very unequally endowed urban spaces to a bidding game that increases initial disparities. This fragmentation is in addition to old forms of segregation that, far from attenuating, are reconstructed, under the intense socio-economic differentiation at work, above all in neighborhoods whose salaried populations are victims of crises and successive adjustments.

Segregation and fragmentation nurture each other due to a lack of massive measures to help disadvantaged populations catch up and voluntarist schemes to correct intra-urban inequalities.

*c. Local Room for Initiative and Learning: Counter-Fragmentation?*

Situations are nevertheless far from rigid and opposite trends exist. Some are the effects of (still fragile) re-legitimization of government authorities in conducting city affairs, encouraged by the World Bank. The affirmation of these incentive and regulation functions expresses itself in planning documents (Abidjan, Windhoek), “city projects” (Dakar municipalities), sectoral takeover (land intervention by Côte d’Ivoire prefects: Kadet Gahié, 1999), standardization of management of equipment left to informal systems (attempt to regularize standpipe management in West Africa and Zambia).

Others are born from the institutional play introduced by reforms, margins for initiative that can be explored by decentralized and local governments involved in local learning processes. Some produce linkages, pragmatic arrangements, or even counter-fragmentation. They may meet with a strong response from local and national executives (this was the case in Ouagadougou when joint management made it possible for the outlying areas to catch up), or remain in the shadows (such as the forms of financial cross-subsidization for land development and utility management between well-off neighborhoods and poor neighborhoods in Windhoek: Peyroux, 2000).

Other unifying liaisons are carried by new public/private mediation stakeholders. Rushing into the breach of failing public regulation, private structures that belong to the tertiary non-commercial sector developed structuring activities and functions for local urban society (inhabitants’, producers’, and storekeepers’ associations, unions, NGOs, etc.). While they do not always have the ambition to work on reintegrating cities from the outset, they often have the effect of emphasizing social cohesion and, today, are promoted by numerous projects, including technical projects, as indispensable intermediaries (pS-Eau, 1998). Actions of international scope, such as the decentralized development aid program financed by the EC Commission Delegation, bet explicitly on these stakeholders to anchor decentralization in a new institutional culture based on participation, dialogue, and coordination between the various levels of social and political organization (of Boismenu *et al.*, 1999; Allou, Di Loreto, 2000).

Other processes are at work and pertain to sociability and its networks (in Abidjan: Marie, 1998), reinvestment resulting from international migrations (in Dakar: Tall, 2000), and residential

mobility (in Bamako: Bertrand, 2000). It remains to be determined whether or not these re-affiliation mechanisms, notably for disadvantaged populations, are precursors of innovative and sustainable mechanisms.

## **2. Urban Territories and Regulation**

### *a. Public Regulations: from Hegemony to Selection*

Any study of fragmentation may not therefore be disassociated from the study of authorities and their urban management. Analyses of governance in Southern Africa highlight the formation of flexible and sophisticated forms of partnership, negotiation, and contractualisation destined to ensure management coordination of this plurality of stakeholders (Swilling, 1997). They do not sufficiently discuss the fact that these widened partnerships—that are often deprived of stabilized frameworks for action and overall regulation schemes—can above all favor oligarchic agreements between dominant stakeholders aiming to promote similar interests selectively and temporarily, to the detriment of other priorities that are nevertheless proclaimed by official urban policies.

In African cities, the gap between announced objectives (integration, catching up) and concrete results remains enormous. States claim close control of urban affairs even though they have rarely exercised such control in the past. The current situation corresponds more to selective interlocking of niches, without concern for overall coherency. Local governments proceed in the same manner, choosing certain niches and leaving others to national and foreign NGOs and collective associations. The results appear to conform with the expectations of numerous opinions on decentralization but, while claiming to come from the principle of subsidiarity, this approach proceeds in the opposite manner: the upper levels of the State administrative apparatus define, by elimination, what belongs to them before each of the lower levels does the same.

### *b. Local Scale Regulation: Territory as Tool?*

These observations lead to the crucial question of local scale regulation. Regulationist economists working at macro scale identify “territories” that in fact designate institutional configurations. At local scale, applications of regulation theory are somewhat more spatialized but mainly concern groups of enterprises (industrial districts, clusters). The regulation concept is rarely

territorialized, except in a few pioneer analyses of United States municipalities (Harvey, Scott, 1989), the location of investments in urbanized areas (Storper, 2000), or labor relations (Dupuy, Gilly, Perrat, 2001). Yet, urban governance—which is only part of the institutional reconstruction effecting the ensemble of socio-political balances—refers to two dimensions of local regulation.

The first, of a political nature, concerns arbitration between economic competitiveness and social equity. Today, the objectives of management rationalization and economic productivity win out over social redistribution. How are poor city dwellers demands covered? And by whom? If previous practices (equity subsidization of rates for utilities, cross-subsidies for access to land, etc.) are disqualified, how and by whom are the functions that were supposed to fulfilled by public utility monopolies ensured? Under what conditions can local promotion stimulate the policy coordination modes indispensable to income redistribution? What social and economic sustainability can these new arrangements have?

The second, of a geographic nature, deals with spatial dimensions and control of processes underway. The plurality of schemes and practitioners of diverse statuses favors the territorialization of different management systems and the multiplication of local intra-urban regulation systems that threaten urban cohesion and unified city operation. Whose responsibility is it to coordinate the location of private investments within urban areas? Who must ensure the coherency of the utility supply and, for example, arbitrate between its extension to poor clientele and the maintenance of existing networks? Who should block the temptation of certain segments of wealthy city dwellers to disassociate themselves?

To answer these questions, we think it is pertinent to promote territorialized regulation as an object of geographic investigation. This implies articulating different scales: the relationships between multinational utility companies and contracting local governments, those between the major national objectives and those set by local urban governments can not be disassociated from the modes of regulation detected at local scale in urban areas. What is more, at this scale, it becomes possible to move beyond the academic distinction between the study of spheres of power and that of urbanized areas by privileging the identification of reciprocity between systems of stakeholders and intra-urban differentiation; it raises a vital issue—inventing new modes of public action that outdo former principles of planning and project urbanism without totally disqualifying them. This quest for territorialized regulation instruments is complicated—as the emblematic Cape Town experience shows (Watson, 2000)—but, if one believes that such

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instruments are needed for democratically elected local governments to implement social policies, a vast field of theoretical and operational research is open to geographers.

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