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► **To cite this version:**

Claire Bénit-Gbaffou, Alain Dubresson, Laurent Fourchard, Karine Ginisty, Sylvvy Jaglin, et al.. Exploring the role of party politics in the governance of African cities. Simon Bekker; Laurent Fourchard. Governing Cities in Africa : Politics and Policies, HSRC Press, pp.14-41, 2013, 978-07969-2416-2. hal-02779300

**HAL Id: hal-02779300**

**<https://hal.science/hal-02779300>**

Submitted on 17 Jun 2020

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## 2 Exploring the role of party politics in the governance of African cities

Claire Bénit-Gbaffou, Alain Dubresson, Laurent Fourchard, Karine Ginisty, Sylvie Jaglin, Ayodeji Olukoju, Sam Owuor and Jeanne Vivet

This chapter is inspired by the gap we find in academic literature on the role, impact and place of party politics in urban governance, at both the metropolitan and neighbourhood levels. Much evidence in our fieldwork demonstrates the importance of political parties, their agents and party politics in the everyday lives of city residents, as well as in their discourses, practices, strategies of access to resources, hopes and sometimes fears. However, it seems that few academics, regardless of their discipline (e.g. political studies, urban ethnography, urban politics, urban studies, sociology of social movements), take the matter seriously.

Political studies analysing political parties, electoral studies and democratic theories mostly involve a national focus. At best, they look at regional scales (especially in cases of federalism or secessionism). The arena of ‘politics from the bottom’ – a term derived from *politique par le bas*, developed by French academic (Bayart 1981) – as a response to, or at least in the context of, authoritarian regimes and one-party dominance in Africa – concerns itself with local political dynamics and individual strategies but often outside party politics, assuming that politics is at play outside the usual institutions and political organisations.<sup>1</sup> Strangely enough, therefore, political studies have neglected party politics ‘from the bottom’ – as has ethnography as a whole (Auyero & Joseph 2007).<sup>2</sup> Studies of collective mobilisation and social movements, although extensive (McAdam et al. 1996; Tarrow 1998), seldom take party politics seriously (see, however, Robins 2008), or else discard it as corrupt and aimed at the reproduction of power. Party politics is therefore contrasted with more authentic grassroots movements – possibly reflecting too narrowly the political positions of actual social movements, such as boycotting elections and refusing to engage directly in party politics. More generally, the postmodern reconceptualisation of politics, defined as any display of power in social relations<sup>3</sup> – and therefore broadened to include all aspects of social life (family politics, gender politics, culture politics, food politics, etc.) – has probably led to a marginalisation of the study of party politics as an important part of the daily lives of urban residents, considered as a too narrow and perhaps traditional approach to power.

Urban politics, or, more broadly, studies of urban governance, focus mostly on coalitions of power, urban regimes and relationships between local government and non-state agents (e.g. business lobbies and residents’ groups). Although there is a rich tradition of study of ‘machine politics’ in the governance of big American cities, this thread does not seem to have been followed beyond city monographs. In Africa,

before and during the 1980s, a number of excellent pioneering monograph studies focusing on urban politics were completed (Barnes 1986; Cohen 1969; Werlin 1974; Wolpe 1974), but little has been produced since.

Typically, the urban regime framework, Stone (1993) considers electoral politics as irrelevant, as it argues that urban regimes and interest coalitions supersede party divisions, and survive electoral change. More recently, studies of urban governance (on the rise since the so-called third wave of democratisation and the global spread of decentralisation reforms), while paying specific attention to power games and governability (Jaglin & Dubresson 1993; Olowu & Wunsh 2004; Otayek 2009), seldom adopt a party-political lens, even though they denounce the hypocrisy of technocratic reforms that pretend to ignore the political nature of urban governance.

Urban studies mention the importance of party dynamics at the neighbourhood level, but seldom focus on them. Party politics is present, but often anecdotally or as a contextual element, aside from the study itself. It is sometimes mentioned briefly as influencing residents' perspectives of their survival tactics, especially in cities of the South, where patronage (political or not) is key to accessing resources (Mbembe & Roitman 2002; Simone 2004, 2006). In brief, although case studies of local party politics are to be found, academic work focusing on this topic is limited, and theorisation and generalisation on the role of party politics in urban governance are scant.

This scarcity in the body of academic work is particularly acute in African contexts. Studies on party politics and urban governance covering Latin American cities are more widespread. There, academic work on urban governance and participation, quite abundant especially in Brazil, has begun to highlight the (neglected) role of politics and its impact on a too simplistically praised model of participatory democracy (Cornwall 2007). Several studies have analysed the importance of urban clientelism and patronage in particular (see Gay [1998], for a summary, and Auyero et al. [2009]), and reclaim forms of agency of low-income urban residents, arguing that local clientelism offers them some access to state resources and to a form of political accountability. In Indian contexts, some scholars observing local democracy have also attempted to reflect on the specific nature of local politics in cities of the South, and have proposed theoretical frameworks to analyse it. The uncertain, temporal nature of agreements and arrangements between so-called informal residents – 'the majority of the world' – and local politicians has been termed 'political society' (Chatterjee 2004), while the flexibility of pragmatic administrations or political representatives unable to stick to unrealistic urban master plans and make the city work for its people (as well as to make some money out of the gaps) has been described as 'porous administration' or 'governance by stealth' (Benjamin 2004).

In the case of African cities, although these themes have been raised (Blundo & Olivier de Sardan 2001), they have seldom been linked to the nature of urban governance, urban governability or urban democracy. This difference might be explained, on the one hand, by the more recent character of urbanisation in Africa (or, compared to India, the relatively smaller size of its metropolitan areas<sup>4</sup>) and,

on the other, by the very recent rise of decentralisation, democratisation and multipartism in Africa, which – even when superficial – tend to magnify the role of political parties, their mobilisation strategies, their ability to distribute resources and their desire to control civil society at the local and metropolitan level.

There are some monographs on the articulations between traditional authorities and elected representatives – which somehow link with the topic of politics and urban governance – as consolidated by Mamdani's work on the bifurcated state in Africa (Mamdani 1996). These are illustrated by some urban case studies (see Legros [2002] on Senegal; Quénot [2007] on Ghana), but they are mostly rural in focus (see Beck [2001] on Senegal; Jackson [2005] on Sierra Leone; Kyed & Buur [2006] on Mozambique). Some work on African cities alludes to the importance of party politics in urban governance, but in general, and not centrally as a research object (see, for instance, Katumanga [2005] on Nairobi; Legros [2002] on Dakar; Quénot [2007] on Accra and Ouagadougou), unless it is about the study of violence and conflict, often at the junction between local and national politics (for instance, De Smedt [2009] and Mueller [2008] on post-electoral violence in Nairobi; Potts [2006, 2008] on Harare). Portraits abound of 'big men' in positions of power at a metropolitan scale (for instance, De Smedt [2009]; Pellerin [2009]), but, again, the city is considered more as a step towards national power than as the object of governance, and the political networks and positions of the big men are displayed more at a national level than analysed through their links to urban governance and governability.

Only recently<sup>5</sup> have scholars attempted to look more directly at the articulation between patronage, politics and urban governance (see, for instance, Albert [2007] on the links between the transport mafia and politicians in Lagos; Bénit-Gbaffou [2011] on decentralisation/local participation and political clientelism in Johannesburg; Fourchard [2011a] on clientelism and historical political opposition between the federal state and the Lagos State government in Nigeria).

In this chapter, we explore the place of party politics in urban governance by focusing on the post-1980s period, shaped by the processes of decentralisation and democratisation. We believe that this approach is important and innovative in understanding African city governance and governability (meaning both the ability to govern and to be governed), and that the convergence of the authors' various disciplines, the research topics and the urban contexts might open relevant avenues for further study.<sup>6</sup>

The key issue we wish to raise in this chapter is the relationship between party competition and urban governability. This can be understood in at least two dimensions. Firstly, in terms of efficiency, does party competition prevent consistency and continuity in urban policies or does it increase pressure on local government to deliver? And, secondly, in terms of democratic output, does it lead to greater accountability? Does it give low-income residents a voice/options/some access to power or resources? These two dimensions of governability will be approached successively through two scales of analysis: the metropolitan scale and

the neighbourhood scale. At the metro scale, the main entry point is the role of political competition (at all scales, vertical and horizontal<sup>7</sup>) in enabling or disabling municipalities to implement consistent and continuous urban policies. At the neighbourhood scale, the approach focuses on political parties' strategies to build a support base, and what this means for residents' ability to be heard, to get access to public resources and, more broadly, to hold their government to account.

The case studies (see Boxes 1–11) involve large metropolitan areas (as opposed to small and medium-sized cities), and often capital cities (economic and/or political capitals).<sup>8</sup> Either way, they are strategic cities at the national level in terms of both political control and economic significance, with influences that extend far beyond just the metropolitan level. The cities present a variety of political contexts: some have a high level of political competition, whether horizontal (Cape Town, Nairobi) or vertical (Cape Town, Lagos, Nairobi). Some are governed by a dominant party system (Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, Maputo) or a relatively stable democratic system (South African cities). And in some, violence is used as a way of contesting political results, and fraud is often suspected in the conduct of elections (Kenyan, Nigerian and Mozambican cities). The cities studied also reflect different degrees of (un) governability<sup>9</sup> (the South African metropolises present a fair degree of governability compared with Nairobi and Maputo, for instance) and they are shaped by contrasted forms of politicisation of social divisions. In Cape Town political divisions overlap substantially with racial ones, and the same is true to a lesser extent in Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni. In Nairobi, however, it is ethno-regional differences that shape the political landscape, and to some extent in Maputo, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Lagos as well.

### **Governing 'strategic' cities: Party competition and the challenges of cooperative governance**

One way of assessing urban governability is to ask whether the implementation of major urban projects and policies (for example, metropolitan infrastructure provision, or smaller projects) is consistent, continuous and actually takes place (the issue here is not the nature of such projects or their urban and social effects, or political orientation). If not, what is the role of politics in explaining discontinuity or implementation failure? Are the discontinuities and failures of urban policies, which compromise governability, linked primarily to political competition and competing strategies for control by political parties, or are they caused by other factors, such as a gap between different scales of governance and regulation (whereby major decisions are taken by global economic players at a regional or continental level, whereas urban policies are decided at the metropolitan level, where no real power is exerted over economic dynamics and policy implementation)? Both arguments are complex, as neither fit with urban regime theory, for instance, which argues that the nature of the party in power is not what matters, and that coalitions with business persist no matter who the political leaders are (even if the players themselves might change parties with political change) – such so-called growth coalitions ensure stability in

terms of politics, economics and urban policy. Here we seem to have, however, a certain level of instability in urban governance, which some describe as the effect of global uncertainties in developing contexts (Lindell 2008; Simone 2004).

Horizontal party competition (at the municipal level, between the leading party and its opposition or within one party, in the form of factionalism<sup>10</sup>) remains difficult to measure – or at least has not been studied much – in particular in terms of its effects on urban governability. Academic analysis has provided more evidence for vertical political competition – between different scales of government. Indeed, in spite of claims that the neoliberal global model has led to a rescaling of worldwide power, giving metropolitan governments more power and autonomy (Brenner 2004), and in spite of global pressure for decentralisation and metropolitan governance, economic and/or political capitals still represent a strategic stake for state authorities that retain, or wish to retain, a degree of control over their governance and policies.<sup>11</sup>

The importance of this stake is particularly visible in contexts of political opposition between central and local levels of government (i.e. state, provincial and metropolitan tiers). In Africa major cities are often strongholds of political opposition (for example, Nairobi, Lagos, Kano, Harare, Douala, Lomé), as sometimes the dominant party (typically a former liberation movement) has built its legitimacy on land redistribution and the support of rural constituencies, especially in countries with a low rate of urbanisation. In contexts where metropolitan councils or regional governments are politically in line with the central state (for example, Maputo, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Ouagadougou), conflicts or gaps between different scales of government are less visible, but no less important is the desire of central governments to extend their political influence or domination over the governance of strategic cities. Decentralisation in Africa has often been understood as a means to multiply ways of rewarding loyal party members by offering them positions in decentralised political and administrative offices, and as a means to embed political control at a more local level (Otayek 2009).

This power struggle over the governance of strategic cities has an impact on city governability. In globalising contexts, where cities compete to attract international investment, and where decentralisation and new urban management principles have been adopted globally (with various local interpretations) and there are divided powers and functions pertaining to urban policies and planning among several layers of government and various agencies, city governability depends to a high degree on cooperation among different tiers of government (central, regional and municipal). In many cases, cooperative governance among those different tiers is problematic. Is this a general difficulty of cooperative governance, which often blurs distinctions between powers and functions, or is it merely a party-political issue? Some argue that the difficulties of multi-tier urban governance are sufficient to explain issues of governability (see Box 2.1); others insist that these difficulties are made impossible to overcome in contexts of political opposition among the different tiers of urban governance (see Box 2.2).

**BOX 2.1 RESCALING URBAN GOVERNANCE: A CHALLENGE ON ITS OWN: THE CASE OF CAPE TOWN**

Local politics in Cape Town has been analysed by many researchers as a 'governance crisis' undermining the efforts of the City of Cape Town (CoCT) to change the city with its inherited divisions. Can we assume that without the political instability and the permanent struggle between the ANC and the Democratic Alliance (DA), the CoCT would have been in a better position to tackle the challenges of urban growth, planning and economic development? We argue that, beyond the real consequences of the ANC–DA politicking, structural problems relate to political rescaling in a context of neoliberal globalisation.

The amalgamation process that accompanied the transition from apartheid (merging formerly racially divided local authorities) has not (yet) established an effective governance coalition in Cape Town. Not only does a more stable relationship between the city's officials and the local political elite remain to be built, but the relations between the local public actors and the private arena have to be reinvented. In the meantime, the capacity of the CoCT to set a metropolitan agenda has been hampered by local political struggles. We suggest that understanding the real nature of the so-called governance failures requires going beyond the local political context.

First, in certain strategic areas, the limits of municipal actions are determined by the failures of vertical governance within the multi-level government system, which are beyond local control. Coordinating a whole array of complex management contracts, partnerships and programmes is not an easy task. The current difficulties are linked to local mismanagement and politicking, but it should be stressed that steering urban development cannot be successful without sound multi-level cooperation and strong national backup.

Second, and more importantly, the limits of municipal actions are determined by the functional mismatches between the scale of governance and the levels of economic regulation. If not powerless, the CoCT is not geared to cope with many of the consequences of a neoliberal globalised environment. The city faces trends that are often out of its control and contrary to its objectives of urban integration. It must be stressed that local dynamics are embedded in – and shaped by – broader forces. In such a context, local political instability should be regarded as only one, and probably not the most serious, barrier impeding the city's efforts, giving rise to questions about both metropolitanism and political rescaling processes. (See also Box 2.6.)

**BOX 2.2 PARTY POLITICS AS CENTRAL IN EXPLAINING URBAN POLICIES AND GOVERNABILITY: THE CASE OF LAGOS**

Lagos has been the seat of two major rival powers. On the one hand, it was the seat of the colonial and federal governments (1914–1991), which were dominated either by a coalition of eastern and northern political parties during different civilian regimes, or by northern-dominated military regimes. On the other hand, the dominant party in the Western Region, the Action Group (AG), led by Obafemi Awolowo (1909–1987), was regularly in opposition to the federal government during the late colonial period and the First Republic (1954–1966), during the Second Republic under the political banner of the United Party of Nigeria (UPN) (1979–1983) and during the Fourth Republic (1999–2007), with the Alliance for Democracy (AD), an offshoot of the AG and UPN. Bola Tinubu (governor of Lagos State, 1999–2007) and Babatunde Fashola (the current governor of Lagos State, elected in 2007 under the banner



of the Action Congress [AC], an offshoot of the AD) are two Awoists belonging to the same political family. Consequently, there is a marked, ongoing conflict between the federal government and Lagos State leaders.

This historical antagonism has been particularly obvious in the contestation over the management and allocation of public resources by the federal government. Among the various contentious issues, some have had direct consequences on the planning operations of the metropolis. These include disputes over slum removal operations in the centre of Lagos (a stronghold of the opposition) in the 1950s, the battle over the provision of road and rail transport infrastructure between the Western Region (and Lagos State) and the federal government from the 1960s to the 1980s, and the current conflict over the number of local governments in Lagos State (see Box 2.3). These antagonisms have been a serious handicap to any intergovernmental infrastructural projects in the capital city, and to public policies in general (notably transport policy).

Whether political competition is at the core of cooperative governance challenges or not, political opposition between central and metropolitan governments<sup>12</sup> certainly makes it more difficult to govern cities. Indeed, it is worth drawing attention to the tactics used by the higher tier of government to hinder the lower tier's ability to

**BOX 2.3 THE POLITICS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE CENTRE UNDERMINING LOCAL TIERS OF URBAN GOVERNANCE**

Nigeria's Fourth Republic Constitution of 1999 recognised 20 local governments in Lagos State. In March 2004, in the framework of local-government elections, Lagos State decided to create 37 additional local governments (in the name of better representation for a large and underestimated urban population) and to hold elections in 57 local councils, despite the official opposition of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) federal government.

The creation of additional local-government constituencies was not officially recognised, as they had to be approved by the PDP-dominated National Assembly, which did not bother to debate the request. Opposition parties in Lagos – to all intents and purposes, the PDP – backed the federal government decision and boycotted the 2004 local elections, allowing Bola Tinubu's AD to win all local-government councils. In response, the federal government decided to withhold allocations meant for local councils in Lagos State. This decision was, however, declared illegal by the Supreme Court in a December 2004 ruling, while the 37 purported councils created by the Lagos State government were also declared illegal, as only the National Assembly has the right to create new local governments in Nigeria. But instead of disbanding them, the state government renamed them Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs), and in October 2008 organised fresh elections in the 20 local councils and the 37 LCDAs, despite the boycott by the PDP and the protestations of other parties. As a result of the conflict between Lagos and Abuja, Lagos local governments were denied their statutory allocations from the Federation Account under President Obasanjo (1999–2007). His successor, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007–2010), paid the balance to Governor Fashola, but his attorney general, Michael Aondoakaa, recently sought to resume the altercation over the status of the LCDAs. In effect, for the better part of the last five years Lagos has been denied its due allocations for the basic facilities provided by local governments (including roads, primary schools and health centres).



**BOX 2.4 HOW A SMALL COMMUNITY GARDEN IS DRAWN INTO A THREE-LAYERED POLITICAL GAME: THE CASE OF THINASONKE GARDEN, MIDVAAL (SOUTH AFRICA)**

The Thinasonke Project<sup>13</sup> aims to develop a community garden in a small township on the periphery of the Midvaal municipality, which is governed by the DA. The project is part of the corporate social-responsibility effort of Rand Water, a private company, and is aimed at a small number of residents in an ANC-dominated ward. The project did not receive a lot of support from the DA-run municipality, which (either out of inertia or intentionally) failed to provide the necessary water connections, and blocked the project for some time. Rand Water and local residents went to the provincial level (the province of Gauteng, which is ANC-dominated) to put pressure on the municipality. Its failure to do so resulted in the province taking over the management of the municipality (a move that the Gauteng provincial government had been seeking for a long time). The water connection was quickly established and the project resumed.

This case illustrates several aspects of party politics and urban governance:

- The importance of political motivation in having planning processes fast-tracked or delayed.
- Political competition and government fragmentation offer leverage to non-state actors, who are able to use several government (and political) channels to get access to resources or project delivery.
- The power of business and private companies in playing these games: the fact that the director of Rand Water was a former ANC activist and had personal links with ANC provincial officials may have been crucial in catalysing the province to intervene, which might have not reacted to a request from a handful of residents. In this case, Rand Water had a vested interest in the success of its corporate social-responsibility project, and formed a fruitful coalition with residents.
- Projects as pretexts for political battles, not as ends in themselves: the community garden was not a main concern of the Gauteng provincial government, but it was happy to utilise the project to delegitimise and disempower the opposition-led municipality – and had been looking for pretexts to do so.

govern the city, as they recur in many different national and local contexts. These tactics are more or less radical, and vary from petty bureaucratic impediments to power-capture and sidelining democratically elected local governments. They are not mutually exclusive, and in fact are often pursued simultaneously.

### **Blocking financial transfers to the lower tier**

As metropolitan resources often partly depend on central grants, an easy way for central government to undermine metropolitan councils is to block, limit or delay financial transfers to local governments (see Box 2.3).

These delays and disagreements can also occur in non-oppositional contexts, as a result of sheer administrative hiccups or dysfunctional departments (a case of institutional fragmentation), but there is undoubtedly a degree of intentionality in using those common administrative hitches to politically undermine one's opponent (see Box 2.4).

## Cooperative governance projects: Playing on fragmentation

In the case of projects that involve cooperative governance among several tiers of government (for instance, flagship projects, or ones of national importance located in strategic cities, as well as issues of regional planning like infrastructure and transportation planning), refusal by one tier to cooperate or even deliberately taking conflictual action are effective ways of blocking a project (see Box 2.5).

Such actions can become a double-edged sword, as the failure of flagship projects can damage the national image as much as the local. Cape Town's governance is interesting in this regard. There is a contrast between the relatively successful process leading to the construction of the Cape Town Stadium for the 2010 World Cup (whose failure would have damaged South Africa's reputation as a whole) and the failure of the flagship N2 Gateway housing project (see Box 2.6).

### **BOX 2.5 HOW PARTY POLITICS UNDERMINES ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE IN LAGOS**

The contentious issue of the control and maintenance of Lagos's roads has become a serious political battle since 2003. Adeseye Ogunlewe, a senator elected under the platform of the AD, defected to the ruling PDP and unsuccessfully challenged AD Governor Tinubu in May 2003. Ogunlewe was compensated with the post of federal minister of works, and soon embarked on extreme political brinkmanship with Tinubu. Goaded by President Obasanjo, who was thwarted by Tinubu in Lagos State in his bid to pull all western states from the AD to the PDP, Ogunlewe engaged Tinubu in what turned out to be bloody proxy wars on Lagos's roads.

On assuming office as minister of works, Ogunlewe established the Federal Roads Management Agency (FERMA), which, by its nomenclature, was supposed to undertake routine maintenance of failed portions of federal highways throughout the country. As it turned out, FERMA was rapidly transformed into an enforcement agency of the minister. Of the country's 36 states, it was only in Lagos that it clashed with the state authorities. Tinubu, in turn, established the Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA) and its enforcement agency, the Kick Against Indiscipline Brigade. As the confrontations between the two political gladiators and their proxies intensified from about June 2004, newspapers began to carry reports of bloody encounters between the opposing groups of enforcers. Each of their principals laid claim to his turf and ordered functionaries of the other party off the respective (federal or state) roads, which were all within the Lagos municipality. There were accusations that the minister frustrated attempts by the state government to secure a \$77 million World Bank facility for LAMATA, denied requests by the state government to construct pedestrian bridges across federal highways and undermined the state government's bid to construct a fourth mainland bridge. The organised private sector also accused FERMA of collecting illegal tolls from motorists and business premises. The violent confrontations finally petered out in 2006, when Obasanjo removed Ogunlewe in a cabinet reshuffle, and the new minister from Lagos abandoned Ogunlewe's brinkmanship for collaboration with his state. Finally, when Obasanjo himself left office in 2007, his successor adopted a different approach to Lagos, at least on the roads issue.

**BOX 2.6 CONTRASTING FATES OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION IN URBAN PROJECTS IN CAPE TOWN**

Agreement between the three spheres of government, as well as efficient cooperation, made possible the construction of the 2010 World Cup stadium in Cape Town. However, the project was not completed without hard negotiations concerning the total amount to be put on the table by the Cape Town municipality in order to improve local urban infrastructure and facilities around the new stadium, as well as to implement a public bus rapid-transit system, and the management of investments channelled by the central state.

By contrast, the N2 Gateway housing project is a symbol of bitter failure within the sphere of public–public cooperation, arousing first suspicion and then a violent struggle between the ‘partners’ on the one hand, and the three spheres of government and poor urban dwellers on the other (Smit 2006). This public housing action, implemented by the Western Cape provincial government and the municipality, was theoretically conceived to satisfy the needs of 25 000 poor city dwellers located along or close to the N2 highway. Launched in February 2005, the project was driven by a steering committee initially involving all three levels of government.

But the 2006 local elections handed political control of the City of Cape Town to the DA, at national level the official opposition party to the ANC. From this point, there was continual conflict between the municipality and the other two levels of government, fuelled by a forensic audit initiated by the new city administration into the financing of the N2 Gateway project. The conflict culminated in June 2006, when the municipal government was kicked out of the steering committee, while the national minister of housing announced that the project would be run along private-sector lines.

After it became apparent that the provision of multi-storey rental housing for the poor was not a viable option under the national subsidy framework, the plans had to be changed. The net result was that a greater proportion of residents of informal settlements had to be relocated. In all, the N2 Gateway project involved the relocation of at least 12 000 households from the informal settlements plus at least a further 6 000 backyard shack dwellers. This ‘relocation’ involved a massive eviction of the poor, who were removed to precarious settlements located on the eastern periphery (Delft), 15 kilometres away. Consequently, the vast majority of informal settlement residents refused to move, and embarked upon a series of high-profile protest actions, mobilising the trade union federation, Cosatu, and the Anti-Eviction Campaign against the municipal, provincial and national governments.

In the end, the N2 Gateway has been a triple failure: multi-level government cooperation has collapsed; poor urban dwellers have been evicted; and the economic choices have led to major overspending.

**Gerrymandering**

Gerrymandering is an age-old way of accessing power by manipulating electoral district boundaries in favour of a particular political party. Though this term was first used in the 19th century with regard to early mass democratic politics in the US, it may usefully be applied in African politics. In the African context, the definition of electoral and local-government boundaries is generally a national responsibility (sometimes involving local inputs), and gerrymandering is a way of attempting to maximise the number of wards to be won by a party while limiting those that can be won by the opposition.

**BOX 2.7 GERRYMANDERING AS A FISCAL STRATEGY TO UNDERMINE THE OPPOSITION:  
THE CASE OF DSCHANG MUNICIPALITY, CAMEROON**

Since the first multiparty Cameroonian elections (1996), the municipality of Dschang has been run by a leader from the opposition to the presidential (dominant) party, the Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC), as is the case in large parts of western Cameroon, which is an opposition stronghold. The central government, while officially applying the World Bank-recommended decentralisation principles, found ways of avoiding a significant transfer of power to the municipal level by appointing next to the elected mayor a state-appointed prefect for each municipality (with the real executive power). The government also stopped public transfers of national funds to opposition-led municipalities.

The mayor of Dschang resorted to two strategies in response to this situation. First, he sought international cooperation at municipal level through a programme called *Coopération Décentralisée* (decentralised cooperation), aimed at fostering partnerships between a French and an African municipality, through which he started building a tourist resort in the city. Secondly, he built a market to secure municipal resources from taxes. However, the central state authorities retorted by putting an end to the decentralised partnership and halting the tourist project. It also shifted the municipal boundaries so that the market was excluded from the Dschang municipal jurisdiction, depriving the opposition-led municipality from the fiscal resources.

This strategy eventually led to the defeat of the opposition party in the 2007 municipal elections. The tourist project with France has since resumed through decentralised cooperation under the auspices of the new RDPC-affiliated mayor.

However, gerrymandering practices can be used by both central and local government – even by the lowest tiers of government. In Nigeria, Lagos State unilaterally decided to create 37 new local governments in the metropolitan area (see Box 2.3), arguing that, given its demographic weight, the metropolitan area was dramatically under-represented politically at the national level. Lagos State claimed both political and financial benefits from this process (as the federal state, should it recognise the new local authorities, would need to allocate more financial resources to Lagos), and worked towards building political influence over the city: creating more local governments means being able to reward political loyalists as well as having a firmer political grasp on urban neighbourhoods.

Gerrymandering not only occurs for electoral reasons, however. Authorities may also manipulate boundaries for fiscal reasons – to deprive a municipality of fiscal resources, for instance (see Box 2.7).

### Competing clientelist practices

Creating supra-municipal programmes to ‘enter’ opposition strongholds, or to campaign for the party in place at the supra-municipal level, is a clientelist approach to building local political loyalty in exchange for resources or protection. This happens at a variety of scales in the city. It can be seen at the neighbourhood scale, as is the case in Cape Town’s politically contested coloured townships, where political parties

and tiers of government invest in security programmes with the objective of winning electoral support. Each tier (municipality/provincial government) spearheads competing campaigns and programmes targeted at residents involved in community policing (Fourchard 2011b, 2012). While the DA-run municipality supports certain local security programmes and is an important partner in local police–resident forums, the formerly ANC-run provincial government has organised its own community policing programmes. The question of the efficiency of security provision in this political game is certainly not central to the tactics.

At a broader level, competing clientelist practices target major business groups, be they formal or informal. In Lagos, as in Ibadan, much of the state’s inability to regulate the mafia-like transport system is the result of the politicisation of the transport unions that dominate the sector. The case of political competition over Nigeria’s Oyo State (which includes the Ibadan metropolitan region), as analysed by Albert (2007), is revealing. While the chair of the main transport union, the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), supported and funded the AD governor of Oyo State, in 2001 the federal government (PDP-dominated) sponsored and protected a faction of the NURTW that sought to take over the union’s leadership, as it was aware that it would be difficult to win the state for the PDP in the context of NURTW domination. The reliance of the AD governor on the NURTW made it impossible for him to question or regulate the union’s monopoly on transport organisation. The PDP eventually won the support of the union through the influence of a powerful local PDP political godfather, Lamidu Adedibu. This new support largely helped the PDP candidate to rig and win the governorship of Oyo State in 2007 (Fourchard 2011a).

In this governance model, sharing roles, functions and therefore resources among various tiers of government means that competing political clientelist processes can be displayed simultaneously by various parties, who use the layer of government in which they are dominant. One could argue that these competing clientelist processes defeat the model of winner takes all – said to plague developing countries. The multilayered, multiparty nature of the state may allow for some sharing of state resources among competing political parties and their constituencies. For residents, it might offer a variety of channels of action and increase their leverage on the state (Bénil-Gbaffou 2012; Gay 1998), but in general it seems to benefit the most politically resourced agents, increase government opacity and diminish its accountability. At both the local and metropolitan level, it often leads to fragmented, if not contradictory, initiatives and policies, and seems to contribute to ungovernability (as illustrated by both the case of security governance in Cape Town’s coloured neighbourhoods and the case of transport governance in the Lagos metropolitan area).

### **Intimidating political opponents or opposition constituencies through urban programmes**

In less democratic contexts, urban projects are often used to harass political opponents

and their constituencies. Much has been written about Operation Murambatsvina in Harare (Potts 2006, 2008), whereby Zimbabwe's central government, having taken the upper hand in the opposition-dominated Harare council, embarked on the destruction of informal housing in the city and sent informal dwellers back to the rural areas. Although the motivation for this operation is manifold, and this policy is both embedded in local history and common to many African countries (illustrating a widely shared anti-urban bias), its scale and brutality were unique and have been attributed to the attempt to intimidate and punish political opposition, and disperse its strongholds.

In undemocratic, or less democratic, contexts, however, the contrast between central urban policies (generally more concerned about issues of national image than local constituencies) and local priorities (supposedly more sympathetic to the plight of residents, including low-income residents because they are the voters) is confused, and sometimes even reversed.

### **Recentralising metropolitan governance by superseding or sidelining elected metropolitan councils**

Discarding elected metropolitan councils when they are not from the same political party as the central state is common practice in many African contexts. This may be achieved in various ways, but in general takes the form of central government appointing a city governor, town clerk, metropolitan commission or ministry for the city – all centrally appointed institutions that capture financial resources from the state and render elected municipal governments meaningless and powerless. This has been the case in Nairobi. First, the central authorities appointed a town clerk, whose power was greater than the elected mayor's, then they established a ministry for Nairobi Metro Development (possibly more devoted to promoting the image of Nairobi as a 'world-class city' than the everyday management of the city's infrastructure and attending to its people's needs). It has also been the case in Harare, where central government appointed a commission to govern the city (Potts 2006). Similarly, in Douala, the largest city in Cameroon, the state, concerned about the power of the opposition party at the 1996 municipal elections, appointed local delegates and transferred most municipal functions and resources to these new representatives of the dominant party (Bayart et al. 2001) (see also Box 2.7 on Dschang, a smaller Cameroonian city).

It is no wonder, in these circumstances, that locally elected representatives become less accountable to their constituents than to their party and cease to fight for the votes of residents who have brought them into office, because their elected position does not give them access to resources and power. In Nairobi, the members of Parliament (MPs) elected by urban constituencies therefore wield much more power than ward councillors elected to represent and run the city. The latter are sidelined by the state-appointed town clerk and by the minister. These MPs may fight for their constituencies' local interests, but they do not primarily engage in city governance and planning because they are busier fighting battles at a national level (see Box 2.9).

## Governing local communities: Party strategies, local democracy and collective mobilisation in low-income neighbourhoods

When looking at the role of party politics at the micro level, it is important to keep broader electoral objectives in mind. The importance of client networks in urban lives and livelihoods has been generally highlighted (Simone 2006), and the nexus between civil society and party politics is often seen as a considerable obstacle to democratisation (Tostensen et al. 2001). Groundbreaking work on Latin American cities considers the ways in which clientelism and democratic participation are interlinked and intertwined (Auyero et al. 2009; Gay 1998). However, ethnographic studies on the way political parties construct and consolidate their constituency at the local neighbourhood level (especially in low-income neighbourhoods where the importance of political networks and access to state resources are more important than in higher-income areas) are rarely found in African urban studies.

The question we would like to address here is threefold. Firstly, we would like to explore the strategies and tactics used by political parties at the neighbourhood level to build and maintain their constituencies, at both individual and collective levels (in terms of establishing forms of social control, rewarding loyalties and punishing defection, penetrating and influencing different spheres of civil society, etc.). Secondly, we question the extent to which these forms of exchanges (access to public resources for political support), which vary from clientelist to democratic practices (Bénit-Gbaffou 2011), increase political accountability for low-income residents or weaken civil society's ability to mobilise by fragmenting or sedating it. Finally, we wish to look at the impact of political competition at the local level, and whether it gives residents more bargaining power or – especially in racially or ethnically divided societies – aggravates social cleavages and leads to violence more often than to enhanced democracy and citizenry (Mueller 2008; Piper 2009; Van de Walle 2009).

These three dimensions are linked to governance (i.e. how low-income residents use party politics to make themselves heard in urban governance), and often to governability, as issues of social peace are at stake that might affect the city beyond the local level. For example, the so-called taxi wars in Cape Town are linked to contested agreements between taxi associations and local political leaders, and eventually damage the city's international brand. And Nairobi's post-electoral riots were based on national political manipulation, but also on local and ethnic conflicts between landlords and tenants (Mueller 2008; De Smedt 2009).

### Party branches and voices of the poor in urban governance

Political parties that seek the votes of the poor, which in African cities are the majority, often create mass party structures that open one (among several) specific channel to resources and power (no matter how much real power they yield). The choice of a party structured as a mass movement obviously varies according to the context. It may be the legacy of a liberation movement (such as the ANC in South Africa or the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique [Mozambican Liberation



Front; FRELIMO] in Mozambique) and/or a profitable electoral strategy. The rise of multiparty elections in many African countries, as well as the trend towards decentralisation in most urban-governance models, certainly provide impetus for parties to be grounded locally (Fourchard 2007; Otayek 2009), as there are more resources offered at more local scales of urban territory, more political positions to be filled, and more scope for political campaigning and social control at neighbourhood levels. But mass parties are not restricted to democratic contexts. If one takes the example of Egypt, for instance (Ben Nefissa 2007), it can be demonstrated that the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo have grounded themselves at the very local level as non-profit, social organisations, rendering services to low-income residents on an everyday basis, and acting as skilled brokers between illiterate residents and complex, networked state bureaucracies. But the matter is not only about disguised or open political competition. As the South African or Mozambican examples show, the mass-party strategy, with strongly embedded local branches, does not develop exclusively in politically competitive contexts. The ANC in South Africa renews its identity as a mass party so as to recapture its struggle credentials and consolidate its grasp on local constituencies (Darracq 2009). And FRELIMO has taken over the former Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance [RENAMO]) strongholds of Mocimboa da Praia, Nampula, Monapo and Quelimane in the last 10 years thanks to the growing influence of the FRELIMO patron/client relationships and to leadership divisions within RENAMO (Cahen 2010). Interestingly, in Maputo, FRELIMO both reinforces its network of party representatives at the neighbourhood level (Ginisty & Vivet, forthcoming) while at the same time it is losing its grasp on the historical centre to the new Democratic Movement of Mozambique (De Brito 2010). In both cases, dominant parties are attempting to build on the dense, multi-level political structures inherited from the liberation movements (see Box 2.8).

**BOX 2.8 LEGACY AND RECAPTURING LIBERATION MOVEMENTS' MASS-PARTY LOCAL STRUCTURES: JOHANNESBURG AND MAPUTO**

In Johannesburg, the struggle against apartheid – and in particular the township revolts that erupted in the 1980s, aimed at rendering the city ungovernable – was based on a dense structure of locally grounded, hierarchical committees (from the yard to the street to the neighbourhood to the township level). These residents' organisations (or 'civics', as they were called) developed in a context where parties like the ANC and the South African Communist Party had been banned since the 1950s. Originally independent, they developed more and more linkages with the ANC, which became incrementally the dominant liberation movement (Seekings 2000).

In post-apartheid South African cities, the mythology of this form of popular mobilisation and political efficiency is often used to entrench ANC structures at neighbourhood levels (Fourchard 2009) – paradoxically sometimes sidelining or capturing the very same civic groups that may be critical of the party (Zuern 2006). Local-government participatory structures (ward committees), ward branches of the ANC (sometimes organised into sub-branches) as well as community policing forums (resident–police partnerships at the local level) often call for the organisation of residents in the form of street, or even yard, committees.

Mozambique's 1990 constitution and the democratisation of the country during the 1990s signalled the end of the fusion between the state and the party, and the beginning of a

multiparty system (ending the one-party system implemented at independence), a shift that aimed to loosen state–party control over society. In Maputo local party structures were strongly entrenched in the urban fabric under the socialist regime. Party cells (known as *grupos dinamizadores*) were implemented from 1975 at the neighbourhood level (subdivided into sub-areas, or *quarteirões*, comprising about 50 households, themselves divided into groups of 10 households) (Grest 1995). These cells were presented as platforms to help residents solve their local issues and implement forms of autonomous local self-government, but were in reality a means of exerting social control (for instance, by providing ration cards and controlling in-migration and population movements) in the name of the struggle against the ‘bourgeois enemy’ (Cahen 1985). Decentralisation reforms imposed by the IMF and the World Bank in the late 1990s led to a legal distinction between decentralised government structures (*bairro* [neighbourhood], divided into sub-areas, [*quarteirões*]), whose leaders are elected by residents for a four-year mandate, and local party structures. In practice, however, and in a context of party dominance, there is little difference: leaders of the *quarteirões* are elected at public meetings by a show of hands, and often hold their position for an indefinite period – much in the same way that leaders of the party cells used to be elected. Secretaries of the *bairro* are all card-carrying FRELIMO members; they almost always hold executive positions in the party (such as branch secretaries); and they often work from the former offices of the party cells.

Office of the *bairro* secretary, in the peri-central neighbourhood of Urbanização, Maputo. The name of the former structure is still visible on the wall: *grupo dinamizador do círculo do bairro comunal* (facilitating group for the local municipal circle). This office is shared by the *bairro* (municipal) secretary and the FRELIMO branch secretary. In Urbanização, the current *bairro* secretary was part of the first *grupo dinamizador*, and used to be the FRELIMO branch secretary.



Source: Jeanne Vivet, April 2008. Urbanização, Maputo.

At the neighbourhood level, this often leads party branches and leaders to act as brokers between low-income residents and the state on the one hand, and international NGOs on the other; to access some of the neighbourhood’s resources; to navigate its complexity (or opacity) by short-cutting some channels through political networks; and occasionally even to channel opposition or resistance to municipal or state policies, either in cases of political competition (see Box 2.9) or not (see Box 2.10).

In many instances, party structures appear more efficient at ‘getting things done’ than local-government structures. The (democratic) need to be supported politically (through votes, but also through other forms of public support, such as rallies, petitions, etc. – see Auyero 1999) leads political activists to campaign – sometimes exclusively during election campaigns or, in the case of mass-based parties, in a more general way. During campaigns, these activists are at the forefront of individual and collective demands (much more than the councillor or elected representative in public meetings, which are seldom arenas for debates about local policies or projects), and they have to provide some degree of response (even if short-term, clientelist, etc.). Regarding the

ability of low-income residents to obtain a voice at times of elections, Gay (1998) has interestingly distinguished between ‘individual clientelism’ and ‘collective clientelism’, and sees in the latter an important form of democratic accountability for the poor. Collective clientelism allows the poor to bargain collective votes for a collective good (such as the electrification of a neighbourhood) if they are organised and if local votes matter in a given democratic system. The recent advent of multiparty democracy, and its limitations in many African contexts, means that collective clientelism might not be as fully developed in African cities as it is in Latin American ones.

**BOX 2.9 AN OPPOSITION MP TAKES SIDES IN A LOCAL CONFLICT OVER LAND: NAIROBI**

Grogan is an informal settlement located next to the Nairobi River in the central part of the city. Since 1978, *jua kali* (informal sector) artisans have been operating from a plot in the area. More than 3 000 people, mostly from the Kikuyu ethnic group – whose political affiliation would generally be expected to be with the dominant party, the Party of National Unity (PNU) – earn their living from this plot as vehicle mechanics and workers. The Nairobi City Council collects 50 Kenyan shillings twice a week from each business operator – an indication that the city authorities recognise their existence and operation on this plot. The artisans have a strong association, the Kijabe Street *Jua Kali* Association, which caters for their welfare.

A dispute over the ownership of the plot started in the first quarter of 2009 when the Jamia Mosque Committee claimed legal ownership of it. The Jamia Mosque Committee holds several properties in trust for the Sunni Muslim community in Kenya. Its intention is to construct a mosque and a 30-storey building on the plot – an important investment for the Muslim community.

On three occasions, between March and May 2009, the artisans have been threatened with eviction from the plot, with physical intimidation and looting of property involving hired youths and police. The workers have repaired some of the damage, retaliated against the youths, and have opened a lawsuit against the Jamia Mosque Committee, which has led to a court order allowing them to continue working there until the dispute is legally settled.

In the meantime, while the government looks for an alternative place for them, some of their officials are advocating for compensation for their lost or damaged property. Although the Nairobi City Council (run by a coalition between the PNU and the Orange Democratic Movement [ODM]) confirmed that the plot is owned by the Jamia Mosque Committee, municipal agents pulled down the fence erected by the private developer because the owners had not paid the fee required before undeveloped land can be fenced off. More explicitly, the member of Parliament for the area, Bishop Margaret Wanjiru (an assistant minister in the grand coalition government, and a member of the ODM), visited the artisans, oversaw the demolition of the fence and provided a grader to flatten the trenches dug by the private developers. She urged the artisans to stay put and not to give up the fight, and that no one else should lay claim to the land until the matter is resolved in court. In addition, she promised to fight within the government to make sure that the land is not grabbed by unknown persons.

Bishop Wanjiru’s intervention is significant both to the workers and her political future. Grogan is in the Starehe constituency, represented by Bishop Wanjiru. The member of Parliament is facing an election petition in court, filed by her opponent (who came second in 2007), Maina Kamanda of the PNU. If there is a rerun, she will need strong constituents.

**BOX 2.10 THE FATE OF A COMMUNITY SOCCER FIELD IN JOHANNESBURG**

Prior to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, under the auspices of the Johannesburg Development Agency (a municipal entity managed independently), a community soccer field in a central Johannesburg neighbourhood was converted into a cricket club. It had been initially planned that the soccer field would be revamped within a broader community multi-purpose centre, but the project was put on hold due to a lack of funding. The availability of funding from Cricket South Africa and the support of Ellis Park World of Sports (EPWOS), the organisation responsible for managing the stadiums and other sports facilities in the area, which was willing to consolidate the site into a global 'sports precinct', led to the decision being taken without much debate. When the plan was presented to local residents by municipal authorities, there did not seem to be scope for refusal, even if the project angered residents on several counts.

First, there is a deeply racial undertone to the story. Soccer is still considered a sport for black Africans, and cricket as a sport for Indians (who constitute a slightly better-off group of residents, and form a minority in the area). Secondly, the conversion entrenches a shift from a community facility to a (supposedly global) select club (experiences from facilities managed by EPWOS, where the stadiums are reserved for top athletes, and only seldom available for community uses, have raised concerns). Thirdly, in the frenzy for 2010 and rising enthusiasm for soccer, depriving local residents of the opportunity to play soccer is rather unfortunate – there is no alternative soccer field in the area.

Residents raised the issue in a municipal meeting. They did not want to raise the issue with their (opposition party) councillor, because of their ANC loyalty, even though it might have been a rewarding strategy at election time. They sent a petition to the municipality, in vain. So they brought the issue to their local ANC branch, which quickly convened a meeting with the city authorities. The city was somehow worried that ANC leaders might block the project from above, and promised to build an alternative community soccer field in the area, a promise that residents' requests alone had not managed to get.

In the end, this is a semi-victory for the residents – the neoliberal, global city agenda of building the sports precinct has not been questioned, and the community soccer field has disappeared. But residents have not been as voiceless as they would have been had the ANC local leaders not intervened.

**Political parties and local social control: Sedating dissent?**

However, and especially in contexts of party dominance and undemocratic rule, this everyday presence at the local level gives dominant political parties a high level of social control, which is deployed through a variety of means at the neighbourhood level.

Firstly, there are voluntary party deployment strategies towards civil-society organisations or local participatory structures whereby a member of the party is 'deployed' to stand in the executive committee or as the chair of these supposedly apolitical structures (Béni-Gbaffou 2012). This does not mean that civil-society organisations are dupes or passive. Indeed, such deployment can often be mutually beneficial. A civil-society organisation might also join a party to increase its chances of obtaining contracts, individual or collective resources, or simply more power to

**BOX 2.11 DECENTRALISATION AND MULTIPLICATION OF CLIENTELIST OPPORTUNITIES: THE CASE OF BASIC SERVICE PROVISION IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN MAPUTO**

As mentioned in Box 2.8, decentralised local structures in Maputo (*bairro* and *quarteirões*) are closely intertwined with FRELIMO structures. Decentralised policies encouraging public–private partnerships and, in low-income neighbourhoods, resident participation in the construction and management of urban services often mean increased opportunities for local authorities/local party representatives to act as brokers and often gatekeepers for access to benefits, resources and other opportunities.

In peri-central, high-density, underserved neighbourhoods like Maxaquene, international NGOs, such as the Associação Mozambicana para o Desenvolvimento Concertado, created by French NGO ESSOR and UK NGO Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor, are developing public toilets. The NGO staff, although technically competent, lack a detailed understanding of the neighbourhoods and need to rely on *bairro* and *quarteirao* secretaries to select priority zones and compile lists of beneficiaries. The criteria used to determine who gets access to toilets are opaque and follow clientelist principles: party loyalists are the first beneficiaries, as well as those who can pay a bribe.

Similarly, the Mozambican Water Agency is developing contracts with local residents to manage public water taps at the *bairro* level. Local beneficiaries of these taps are supposed to elect a water committee every five years. These positions are indirectly revenue-generating: the treasurer, often the same person as the president, collects money from users and is supposed to pay it back to the Mozambican Water Agency. Such positions are generally filled by local authorities/party representatives. For instance, in Polana Caniço B (a peri-central informal settlement), the water committee elected in 2000 included seven members, among them three *quarteirao* chairs, three deputy chairs and two members of the Mozambican Women's Organisation (a well-structured mass organisation created by FRELIMO). When the committee was dissolved in 2009 (following the installation of individual water connections in the area), the membership was unchanged, as there had not been another election. In Polana Caniço A, the president of the water committee is a *quarteirao* chair and a cadre of the Mozambican Women's Organisation (she has been in these two positions since 1975). The offices of the Water Committee are shared with the *bairro* secretary, FRELIMO secretary and the principal of the local school, who is also a FRELIMO cadre.

enact and drive its vision. But deployment strategies certainly influence the types of debate and positions that can be held within these public or collective platforms of action and discussion.

Secondly, there are more structural and insidious forms of social control, relying on the specific social interconnectedness of low-income areas. This interconnectedness at the neighbourhood level is generally strong (except in cases of high residential mobility, which renders it more difficult to develop), as it constitutes an important safety net for low-income households (Simone 2006). One can watch one's neighbour and report if he/she has criticised the party in public or private circles, or has not taken part in a political rally or mass action. This behaviour has been described mainly in the context of Latin American cities (Auyero 1999), but also in South African townships during apartheid (Marks 2001) and in African novels (see

Abani 2004). It works well in contexts of clientelism, where expressions or displays of loyalty to the dominant party can win you a contract, a food parcel or some other reward, whereas betraying the party might exclude one from access to public resources (Staniland 2008; see also Box 2.11).

The global context of decentralisation and new urban management principles that have been adopted (and adapted) to govern African cities might increase the relevance of these questions on the linkages between clientelism, forms of accountability and social control. For instance, the rise of public–private partnerships in the management of urban services often takes the form, in low-income neighbourhoods, of outsourcing service provision or management to small NGOs, community-based organisations or emerging local companies (Jaglin 2005). Although this retraction or restructuring of state functions through a degree of privatisation of service provision is intended to limit corruption, nepotism and clientelism, and is openly aimed at depoliticising urban development and governance, the political nature of the awarding of contracts to local organisations often increases clientelist opportunities and the ability of political parties to exert control over public expression of political opposition.

## Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to expose the benefits of adopting a political-party lens in analysing dimensions of urban governance: the field of cooperative, multi-scalar governance of strategic cities (caught between local objectives and national stakes) and the field of civil-society participation in urban governance, whose relative weakness in African cities has often been attributed, without much evidence, to its excessive politicisation (Simone 2006; Tostensen et al. 2001). Although this lens does not purport to capture all governance or governability issues, it opens up a new way of understanding some of their shortcomings and short cuts, their dead ends and networks, and the exceptional as well as everyday modes of shaping the way African cities are governed at the metropolitan and local scales.

Based on the growing evidence of the importance of party politics on the ground – or as ‘the elephant in the room’, which one can avoid seeing or giving consideration to in the academic sphere – this chapter has argued that party politics is pertinent in the context of urban governance and should be a more explicit referent in urban studies in the broad sense of the term. Indeed, beyond the anecdotal evidence stemming from the case studies, the authors have sketched a few general traits, to build typologies and engage in comparative reflection.

The various political tactics used by central governments to block or regain control over opposition-led municipalities, for instance, are common practices that many African intellectuals are able to talk about at length. However, little has been written about these practices. In the first place, this is associated with the generally perceived absence of academic or scientific legitimacy of this multidisciplinary field of knowledge, where party politics at the local level is largely discredited. Secondly, it is linked to the extreme difficulty researchers have in finding the right position

and distance to write about these dynamics. In authoritarian and semi-democratic regimes, where intimidation and violence are still commonly used to deal with political opposition, disclosing party political dynamics is often equivalent to putting oneself at risk. In fully democratic countries, moreover, to write about these political processes is also challenging, since micro-politics at the local or metropolitan level require the researcher to be well connected in local networks (and often also requires an activist's as well as a researcher's skills).

## Notes

- 1 Party politics has not been completely sidelined (see Bayart 1989 and Médard 1987, on 'big men' in Nairobi), but studies have remained on a fairly broad scale. Seldom have such studies directly tackled the issue of the impact of party politics on urban (metropolitan and neighbourhood) governance.
- 2 There are, of course, a few exceptions: Seekings (2000), for instance, clearly shows that the 1980s United Democratic Front in South Africa is an urban-based mass political movement.
- 3 Unlike Auyero et al. (2009), who define politics as 'a realm of interaction in which at least one of the actors is an agent of the government'.
- 4 It is not surprising that the most developed work on party politics and the city has been about Lagos (Albert 2007; Barnes 1986) and Cairo (Ben Nefissa 2007; Singerman 1995).
- 5 With a few exceptions, of course: see Chege (1981) on Nairobi, and Barnes (1986) on Lagos.
- 6 At this stage we are not able to present a full literature review on monographs existing on the topic. Instead, we are attempting, from our case studies and discussions, to define a number of key questions and ideas on the role of politics in urban governability.
- 7 By 'horizontal political competition' we mean the competition occurring between different parties at the same scale of government (for instance, within or for a municipality). By 'vertical political competition' we mean the competition opposing different scales of government (for instance, between a municipality and a province or the state).
- 8 They include Johannesburg-Ekurhuleni, Cape Town, Lagos, Dschang, Nairobi and Maputo.
- 9 Rather than talking about a 'crisis of governance', which is too strong and imprecise a term, we prefer to try to assess degrees of governability, based on general assessment of the ability, for instance, of municipalities to deliver and maintain basic services.
- 10 See Baynes 2010 for a study on the effect of factionalism within the ANC on governance instability in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and the limited ability to plan efficiently for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, for instance. This type of study calls for an anthropology of the state, and deals with high turnover of administrative and political staff, leading to a loss of continuity, institutional memory and expertise.
- 11 This phenomenon is not specific to African cities, as can be seen in the current battle for the governance of Greater Paris, whose municipal and regional governments are dominated by the Socialist Party, whereas the state is led by the other main party, the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP). In Paris, the state and regional governments compete for transport mega-projects (e.g. the Grand Paris urban renewal plan, based on an underground peripheral metro, as opposed to the regional tramways plan) that will bear their mark, and attempt to undermine each other, with counter-productive effects on regional planning.



- 12 Often it is a three-tier conflict between central, provincial/regional and municipal governments (opposition can occur between each of the tiers, and tends to vary in time), which makes governing even more complex. In Lagos, there is opposition between the federal state, on the one hand, and Lagos State and Lagos municipality on the other. In Cape Town, the split used to be between Cape Town Metropolitan Council, on the one hand, and the Western Cape province and the central state on the other. This shifted when opposition parties gained control of the provincial government.
- 13 The primary source for this case study is a Planact (2010) study on participation and governance.

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