

Research Workshop

Inside the black box: The political economy of local governments and their role in rural development

February 3-4, 2010

Organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, DC
and the University of Kiel (EU-E-VAL Project), Kiel, Germany

Venue: IFPRI, 2033 K Street, NW Washington, DC,

Program

Day 1: February 3, 2010

8:00-8:45	Registration and continental breakfast
8:45-9:00	Welcome by IFPRI Director General & Conference Organizers
9.00-10.00	Keynote Paper <i>Pranab Bardhan and Dilip Mookherjee</i>
	Session 1: Methodological advances in analyzing local governments
10.00-10.45	Computable General Political Equilibrium Models as a tool to analyze local politics: An application to Poland <i>Christian Henning and Volker Saggau</i>
10.45-11.00	Coffee Break
11.00-11.40	Is Deliberation Equitable? Evidence from Village Meeting Transcripts <i>Radu Ban and Vijendra Rao</i> http://www.cultureandpublicaction.org/bijupdf/ban_rao_deliberation_1202.pdf
11:40-12:20	Dignity through Discourse: Poverty and the Culture of Deliberation in Indian Village Democracies <i>Vijendra Rao and Paromita Sanyal</i> http://www.cultureandpublicaction.org/bijupdf/Rao_Sanyal_2009_Annals.pdf
12:20 -12:40	Influence-Network-Mapping as a Tool to Assess How Local Governments Implement Development Programs – Evidence from Ghana and India <i>Regina Birner, Madhushree Sekher, K. Gayathridevi, Katharina Raabe and Eva Schiffer</i>
12:40-1:15	Lunch Break
1:15-2:00	Estimating Policy Networks and Political Influence of Local Elites: A Latent Class Model Approach to Polish and Slovakian Policy Elites <i>Christian Assmann, Christian Henning and Eva Krampe</i>

2:00-3:00	Keynote paper <i>Ehtisham Ahmad</i>
3:00-3:15	Coffee Break
	Session 2: Institutional design and public resource allocation
3:15-3:55	Can Institutional Design Limit Clientelism? A Study of the District Assemblies Common Fund in Ghana <i>Afua Branoah Banful</i> http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00855.pdf
3:55-4:35	Do External Grants to District Governments Discourage Own-Revenue Generation? A Look at Local Public Finance Dynamics in Ghana <i>Tewodaj Mogues, Sam Benin and Godsway Cudjoe</i> http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00934.pdf
4:35-4:50	Coffee Break
4:50-5:30	How Do Reservation Policies Influence Inter-Village Public Resource Allocation? Evidence from Karnataka <i>Nethra Palaniswamy and Nandi Krishnan</i> http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00834.pdf
5:30-6:10	How do Local Power Structures Influence Inter-Village Public Resource Allocation in China: The Role of Elected Village Leaders and Appointed Party Secretaries <i>Xiaobo Zhang and co-authors</i>
	Dinner

Day 2, February 4, 2010

9.00-10.00	Keynote Paper: Perspectives on Decentralization by <i>James Manor</i>
	Session 3: Interactions between rural citizens and their governments
10.00-10.45	Weex Dunx and the Quota: Plucking Local Democracy in Senegal <i>Film</i> by <i>Jesse Ribot</i> , with introduction and discussion http://www.vimeo.com/599291/
10.45-11.00	Coffee Break
11.00-11.40	Political Capture of Decentralization: Vote-Buying through Grants-Financed Local Jurisdictions <i>Stuti Khemani</i>
11:40 -12:30	Lunch (Room set-up for panel discussion)
12:30-2:00	Panel Discussion: Better Rural Services through Decentralization? What are the Policy Options? with <i>Ehtisham Ahmad, Pranab Bardhan, James Manor, Dilip Mookherjee and Stephen N. Ndegwa</i> Opening Remarks: <i>Shenggen Fan</i> Chairs: <i>Regina Birner and Christian Henning</i>

2:00-2:45	Coffee Break (Room set up for workshop)
2:45 – 3:25	Firm-Government Relations Chinese Style: The Impact of Firms' Network Relations to Local Government on Economic Performance in Rural China <i>Jianping Han and Christian Henning</i>
3:25-4:25	Is Reservation of Seats in Local Councils an Effective Tool to Make Local Governments More Responsive to the Needs of Marginalized Groups and Women? Evidence from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka <i>Kiran Gajawani and Xiaobo Zhang; Katharina Raabe, Madhushree Sekher and Regina Birner</i> <i>This session will feature two papers:</i> http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00807.pdf http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00878.pdf
4:25-4:40	Coffee Break
4:40-5:20	Do Geography and Ethnic Diversity Matter for Rural Service Provision? Evidence from Rural Ghana <i>Kamiljon Akramov and Felix Asante</i> http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/gsspwp16.pdf
5:20-6:00	The Impact of Social Networks and Voter Behavior and Local Government Performance: Empirical Evidence from Poland and Slovakia <i>Susumu Shikano and Christian Henning</i>
6:00	Reception

Background and objectives

The last decades have seen a worldwide trend towards decentralization, both in developing and transition countries. By “bringing government closer to the people”, decentralization has a particular promise for reducing poverty and increasing the quality of life in rural areas, which have long been neglected by central governments. Yet, the empirical evidence has been rather mixed in view of problems such as capacity constraints and local elite capture. Even though there is an increasing body of theoretical and empirical literature that deals with decentralization and rural development, important knowledge gaps remain. In particular, many studies treat local governments as a “black box” and do not capture the multi-faceted ways in which rural citizens—men and women—interact with local governments and influence local government performance. The proposed seminar will contribute to filling this knowledge gap by looking inside the “black box”.

The seminar will provide a forum to present and discuss new empirical research that addresses questions such as: Which factors influence the ability of rural citizens to hold local governments accountable, and which channels do they actually use? How do policy networks of local actors look like, and how do they influence local government performance? Which factors influence the voting behavior of rural citizens for local governments? How does the design of local government institutions influence the scope for elite capture? How do societal factors, such as ethnic fragmentation, influence service provision by rural governments? The seminar will also deal with research methods that can be used to better understand what happens “inside the black box” of local governments: How to identify and explain variation in local government performance? How to model the political economy of local governments and simulate reform scenarios?

A better understanding of the way in which local governments actually work—depending on their institutional design and the structure of the societies in which they are operate—is essential for the design of successful development interventions as well as governance reform strategies. Hence, the seminar will also provide a forum to discuss the implications for policies and projects that can be derived from this field of research.

Participants

The seminar will feature a set of papers derived from research projects carried out by IFPRI in developing countries (Ghana, India, China) and by the University of Kiel in transition countries (Poland, Slovakia). The projects in transition countries have been part of the E-Val Project, which was financed by the European Union (<http://www.advanced-eval.eu/>). The organizers will invite selected papers from selected researchers who have been working on decentralization and rural development. Researchers who are interested in the topic are welcome to participate at their own expense and to engage in the debate. The organizers will sponsor the participation of key counterparts from the countries in which research has been conducted.

Outputs

It is planned to produce an edited volume based on the contributions from the seminar. A special journal issue may also be considered.