Contentious Politics, Local Governance and the Self a Tanzanian Case Study

(Abstract)

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The Governance Agenda is the framework that currently organises the West's relations with Africa. The present work is an attempt to see Governance through the lens of a contemporary, local history. The report analyses three periods of contentious politics at local level in Tanzania and two multi-party elections. It provides a window on mismanagement in local government, it examines the intervention by national and local elites in district conflicts, and it points to the difficulties ordinary people face in holding their leaders to account.

The argument of the report is that current approaches to the study of Governance overlook an essential ingredient for its potential success: namely, the sociological conditions in which forms of collective action conducive to improved political accountability become possible at a grassroots level. The analysis aims to show that economic diversification and multiple livelihoods have given rise to a reticular social structure in which individuals find it difficult to combine to hold their leaders to account. People have fragmented identities formed in networks of social relations, which impedes the emergence of strong collective identities appropriate to effective social movements.

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