

# The Politics of Governance

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## *An actor-centred approach to governance<sup>1</sup>*

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### **Abstract**

*The concept of governance has enjoyed great attention in the past two decades, both in development studies as well as development policy. It has been endowed with great potential for fostering the institutional underpinning of democratic political and productive economic regimes. However, the empirical realities have shown less optimistic results. Not least from a social-scientific perspective it is a deeply contested term, frequently derived from technocratic and normative premises that find little correspondence to social norms and practices. The quest of this paper is to develop a theoretical framework which pays more attention to agency, actors and power in the formation of political order, with a specific focus on the provision of public goods.*

### **1. Governance: Some Conventional Understandings**

Governance is currently perhaps one of the most fuzzy and yet omnipresent terms across a wide range of disciplines and policy interventions. All the more reason to dwell a moment on some of the more influential understandings of governance. As an entry-point to our own conceptualisation of governance, this section will provide a very brief overview and critique of key concepts of governance.

Currently, there are four dominant approaches to governance, all responding to the complexities of societal regulation in a globalising context.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper forms part of an ongoing research programme addressing governance, politics and agency within the research cluster on political transformations at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel. It is the first part of a forthcoming publication jointly with Till Förster theorising an actor-centered understanding of governance (for a preliminary conceptual outline see Förster/Koechlin 2011).

Firstly, governance is used in terms of *good governance*, which for the last two decades has had a very dominant influence on foreign aid and development cooperation. Good governance is a state-centered concept, denoting a set of specific institutional features and configuration of an effective, efficient and accountable public sector.<sup>2</sup> The good governance agenda has been severely criticised for its normative bias towards a particular, ahistorically defined Western set of public institutions and its disregard for prevalent practices and properties of authority, accountability, legitimacy and decision-making.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, governance is commonly understood as a policy measure that includes the involvement of non-state actors in planning, regulating and governing.<sup>4</sup> Examples include Public-Private-Partnerships, multistakeholder initiatives, or participatory planning and management schemes. Although the key feature of governance in this understanding is its inclusion of non-state actors (both from the private sector and from civil society) and the spreading of decision-making and management across the public/private-boundary – with the underlying premise that such governance arrangements allow for more innovative, responsive and effective problem-solving processes – these arrangements are frequently critiqued for their inability to transcend technocratic solutions.

Thirdly, governance denotes a social-scientific concept, encompassing processes of coordinated collective action between both state and non-state actors to resolve complex societal problems.<sup>5</sup> This understanding is heavily influenced by international relations and political science that were deeply concerned with the erosion of the authority and legitimacy of state institutions in a globalised world (Rosenau/Czempiel 1992, Peters 2000, Kooiman 2002). Social-scientific governance approaches capture processes that go beyond the hierarchical regulation and capacity of governmental or inter-governmental regulation, and yet affect areas and issues that are of public interest. They are thus particularly well suited to address key problems African countries are grappling with, especially the provision of basic public goods such as health or security in a context of weak states (Risse 2008,

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<sup>2</sup> Seminal see World Bank 1992, 1994, or for more recent governance policies see DFID 2006, 2007 or World Bank 2009.

<sup>3</sup> For an early scholarly critique see Leftwich 1993, more recently see Chabal 2009.

<sup>4</sup> For recent applied perspectives in an urban context see UN-Habitat 2008, 2009; for a critique of technocratic urban governance models see Pieterse 2009.

<sup>5</sup> See Pierre/Peters (eds) 2000, Kooiman 2002, Mayntz 2004, Rosenau 2006, or Benz et al. 2007.

Olivier de Sardan 2009, Booth 2009, 2010, Börzel/Risse 2010). Social and political scientific concepts of governance have been critiqued for their propensity to functionalist reduction, stemming from a certain degree of blindness to actors and actors' perspectives of both governance problems and solutions, on the one hand, and to power relations impacting on the representation and participation of actors involved in governance processes on the other hand (Mayntz 2004, Offe 2008).

Fourthly, there is a body of literature emerging looking at governance from a more social anthropological, actors-oriented perspective. Rather than seek to design more effective models of governance, concepts of “practical” (or “real” or “daily”) governance trace the actors, norms and practices that de facto shape the delivery of public services, especially in contexts of weak states.<sup>6</sup> Although there is as yet little critical review in the literature, key authors of this approach are the first to emphasise that it is an *'exploratory concept'* (Olivier de Sardan 2009:18) rather than a fully-fledged analytical model. In our opinion the strength of this approach, namely the empirically grounded focus on micro-dynamics and pluralism of forms of action, also constitute its weakness, in that it obscures an analysis of, firstly, change dynamics over time and, secondly, generalisable forms of governance.

Rounding off this brief overview, it can be seen that “governance” is employed in widely divergent practical and theoretical ways. In spite – or perhaps because – of this polysemy, however, we feel that the analytical perspectives<sup>7</sup> that the term “governance” allows are fruitful for their ability to understand a variety of modes, processes and actors in addressing regulatory problems, types of coordination, and not least flows of power. However, to harness its analytical and practical potential more attentiveness to following areas is required:

i) the nature of power relations between actors, as well as the social setting that the governance arrangement is embedded in;

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<sup>6</sup> See Olivier de Sardan 2011 or Titeca/de Herdt 2011.

<sup>7</sup> With Benz et al. (2007) we subscribe to the view that ‘governance’ does not denote a coherent, systematic theory or even a body of theoretical approaches. Rather, ‘governance’ acts as a conceptual bridge linking particular analytical perspectives across a variety of disciplines, which constitutes both its strength (Benz et al. 2007) as well as its weakness (Offe 2008).

ii) the perceptions and interpretations by stakeholders (within and outside of the governance arrangement) of the problems and solutions defined, addressed and implemented through governance processes;

iii) the inherently contingent nature of such arrangements, where both problems and solutions may shift according to the (changing) perspectives and agency of social actors.

With our title “The politics of governance” we wish to draw attention to this particular analytical perspective, which takes the dynamic relationship between power relations, social practices, norms and values, and interpretations in the formation and (re)production of governance into account. This undertaking requires, however, a novel theorisation of governance. The following section will discuss key heuristic dimensions of such an approach in more detail.

## **2. The Politics of Governance: A Heuristic Typology**

### *2.1. Outlining an analytical framework*

As a point of introduction, it is important to underline that our quest is to develop a coherent analytical framework and the heuristic tools with which a theory of social agency can be fruitfully applied to theorise governance arrangements. This section seeks to lay down the fundamental cornerstones of such an analytical framework by conceptualising governance in a more complex, dynamic and ultimately agency-oriented way. In a first step, we shall seek to elaborate the explicitly political dimension of governance more thoroughly, developing our main arguments that render the interconnections between governance, politics and social agency intelligible. In a second step, we shall seek to develop a heuristic typology of governance processes. This heuristic typology will constitute the backbone of our analytical framework, in that it seeks to capture, on the one hand, the type of political articulation characterising governance arrangements, and, on the other hand, the type of social space that is (re)produced by governance arrangements. The combination of both dimensions, political articulations and social space, will allow a mapping of governance arrangements that go far beyond conventional governance concepts, by capturing their fundamental social and political characteristics rather than dichotomising attributes. In addition, the heuristic

typology will allow to track changes in governance arrangements, as well as plot emerging governance processes according to their political and social articulation.

## 2.2. *Political Articulations*

We begin by arguing that a theoretical framework of the politics of governance needs to capture *the type and degree of political articulations inherent in or triggered by governance arrangements*. At its most basic, politics is concerned with power in its social context.<sup>8</sup> Politics in this sense does not primarily refer to a conventional understanding of politics as the public affairs of polity, but *to the processes through which social actors articulate certain claims and interests, the patterns which frame such articulations, and the struggles by social actors to assert and generalise such claims and interests*.<sup>9</sup> Politics thus refers to processes and operations through which social actors seek to define particular claims across social relations, the operations through which the articulation of interests link up different social actors in a political discourse that goes beyond specific horizons.<sup>10</sup> The important, defining moment of the political here is the engagement between different actors, the moment of articulation in relation to other actors, claims and horizons. Such articulations are eminently political, for as soon as they are enunciated with reference to other actors and claims, in varying degrees they instantiate openings and closures of social agency by affecting the actors' judgements, habits and imagination – and thus, as specific political moment, affecting the structuring of the relations between social actors.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> To avoid a common misunderstanding, “power” here is not conceptualised as necessarily producing “conflict” and “contestation”. Power here is understood in a Foucauldian sense, as an “action upon actions [...] rooted deep in the social nexus” (Foucault 1982:208), flowing through all social relations with *a priori* undetermined (repressive, liberating, etc.) effects. An interesting and underexplored example from social anthropology would be segmentary societies, which are also suffused by power relations that do not, however, produce open conflict and contestation. This point will be elaborated further down.

<sup>9</sup> Clearly, “articulation” need not be a cognitive, assertive action by individual or collective actors. Actors can and often are configured in articulations which do not require a conscious act (see Förster 2005). For a preliminary theorisation of governance and agency see Förster/Koechlin 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Politics in this sense draws heavily from a post-Marxist understanding. See Laclau/Mouffe 1985, Laclau 1996, Laclau 2000 a, b, c.

<sup>11</sup> A pertinent if somewhat rough illustration of what is implied by such an approach can be provided by the current debates on nuclear energy. Acutely triggered by the recent earth-quake induced catastrophe in Fukushima, political debates are blazing on a global as well as national level as to the need for nuclear energy, the perception and evaluation

A political exploration of governance in our sense seeks to clarify the claim-making processes with regard to what constitutes desirable social objectives, the operations through which actors fill these terms with generalised, accepted meanings, the contestations around the definition of such meanings, and the ways in which social actors and social agency is transformed or indeed “frozen” through political processes.

Thus so far we have sought to establish a preliminary connection between politics and agency, linking them through the as yet undefined effects on habits, imagination and judgements of social actors and their horizons. We now need to tie this understanding of politics to a more elaborated concept of governance. What distinguishes governance from politics is that governance by definition involves coordinated action; indeed, the defining feature of governance is the element of cooperation between social actors.<sup>12</sup> More profiled than in the diffuse notion of politics, governance arrangements are characterised by their structured *coordinating* effects on the relations between social actors.

Such structuring effects are clearly not all openly political in the sense that they necessarily instantiate claims and contestations within or beyond the immediate horizon of the social actors involved. On the contrary, as was discussed above, many governance processes are not characterised by a great degree of social and political negotiation or contestation.<sup>13</sup> An aspect neglected by much literature on governance is that governance arrangements need not be coordinated or sustained through common interests (i.e. framed by a more instrumental rationality), but via shared values and a basic, common understanding of the “right” way to do things. Very often, such arrangements are

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of its risks and merits, and more generally a critical debate on energy consumption and production. The debate is triggered by a radical disjuncture, through which established truths and sedimented practices have been physically and symbolically dislocated, opening up new terrains of negotiations, contestation and positioning of and between social actors. Of course such radical disjunctures have a visceral and tangible impact on governance arrangements, as such arrangements are practiced and evaluated and imagined in a completely new light.

<sup>12</sup> See Förster/Koechlin 2011 for a more explicit discussion of agency and its significance for a theorisation of governance.

<sup>13</sup> In fact, in much of the developmental and policy-oriented literature on governance, governance arrangements are valued precisely for their problem-oriented and solution-seeking nature. Here, the prime feature emphasised is the fact that they are uncontested and not problematised – a view that has been strongly critiqued from the beginning as being blind to the power relations such interventions enforce (for an early critique see Leftwich 1993 or Szeftel 1998).

not made explicit; rather, they are configured and iterated through value-informed practices of the actors in a specific configuration.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that many governance processes are iterated without explicit problematisation points us to a key feature of governance. Evidently, some governance arrangements are “closed” in the sense that their rationale, the specifics of their arrangements and the configuration in which they are reproduced are not questioned, perhaps not even cognitively perceived by social actors. The latter holds true of habitually iterated arrangements, but it also holds true of governance arrangements where a large degree of social consensus on their normative basis or instrumental effect exists.

But we cannot stop short by depicting governance arrangements as *per se* “closed”, as unproblematic for and unproblematised by social actors. Clearly, the key issue is the *degree* of closure of political articulations that characterise governance arrangements. For evidently many governance arrangements are characterised by a greater degree of deliberation or contestation, processes which explicitly problematise (aspects of) the governance arrangement. Here, different judgements, values and interests are articulated around the specifics of the governance arrangement. Indeed, some novel governance arrangements are valued precisely for this deliberative, inclusive element that is in-built into the governance process itself. A good example are multi-stakeholder initiatives, which often begin with an encounter, a space provided for different actors to confront each other, to express and debate their values, judgements and interests, which ideally lead to a structured process that allows for the formation of a governance arrangement addressing complex regulatory problems (see Koechlin/Calland 2009 for a typology). However, many governance arrangements also experience a dislocation which may shift them from a closed form of governance to a more open form, in the sense of more contested, more negotiated, more visibly articulated arrangement – a point to which we will return further down.

In other words – and this is one key distinction of our conceptualisation of governance – independently of their regulatory rationale governance arrangements are characterised by a lesser or greater degree of closure/openness of political articulations. What is required, then, is a heuristic typology that is analytically strong enough to capture the different degrees of political articulation

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<sup>14</sup> Much literature on governance, especially with regard to Southern countries, focuses on the tensions generated by conflicting, contemporaneous forms of governance, i.e. state-dominated versus society-dominated, or formal versus informal norms; in the older literature captured through the dichotomy traditional versus modern societal regulation.

inherent in governance processes. Based on above thoughts, we argue that governance arrangements are located along a continuum between “open” governance processes, where dislocations become visible, and “closed” governance processes, where dislocations are concealed to the social actors. Whereas claims, values and imaginations are visibly and explicitly crystallised around governance arrangements located towards the more open end of the continuum, governance arrangements located towards the more closed end are (re)produced in a less explicitly articulated way, with social actors iterating specific practices without their framing being (made) apparent.<sup>15</sup>

In Figure 1 (below) the vertical axis depicts this continuum between open and closed political articulations. The bottom pole, which we have termed closed, implies the kind of governance arrangement that does not involve any visible political contestations and negotiations. Such arrangements could for instance be technocratic in nature, such as certain PPPs or service-delivery-agreements between non-state actors, donors and the state. However, they could also be based on social compacts or value-based arrangements organising the provision of public goods, for instance within particular communities or neighbourhoods.<sup>16</sup> Although they will affect their agency – for instance by facilitating different judgements – they do not “rock the boat” of social actors.

However, at the “open” pole of this axis governance arrangements do precisely that: they rock the boat of social actors, they trigger negotiations and contestations over values, interests, judgements and imaginations.<sup>17</sup> Here, the defining moment is that the governance arrangement instantiates a ripple-effect on social agency, shaking loose habitual or iterated practices and revealing the *a priori* open, undetermined nature of such arrangements.

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<sup>15</sup> We hasten to add that this qualification presupposes no normative assessment on better or worse types of governance. At this first step in the analytical procedure, the intention is solely to develop a heuristic tool with which significant aspects of governance processes can be grasped and analysed.

<sup>16</sup> Note that in much literature such arrangements are criticised for the “depoliticised” nature. In our reconceptualisation, they not depoliticised, they are configured in a way that closes possible contestations. However, at any time a dislocation reveals the deeply political nature of such arrangements.

<sup>17</sup> On the conceptualisation of imagination as a key dimension of agency, see Emirbayer and Mische 1996; for the importance of imagination for social change see classically Castoradis 1975; for the importance of “tropes of moral imagination” for political change in Africa, see Comaroff/Comaroff 1999.



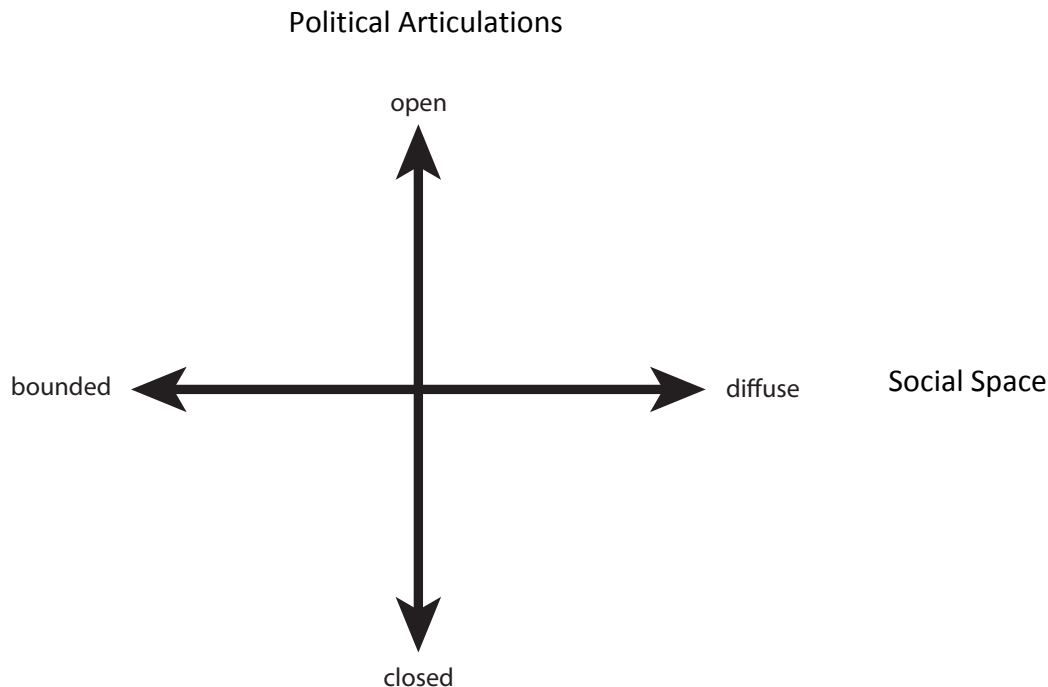


Figure 1 “A heuristic typology of governance arrangements”

With this axis a much sharper analysis of the type of structuring effects of specific governance arrangements becomes possible. Leaving conventional, but often empirically empty definitional categorisations aside (such as state/non-state, public-private, formal-informal etc.), a typology of governance processes along their type of political articulations allows an analytically and politically meaningful *mapping of sustained governance arrangements*. But just as interestingly, if not even more so, it allows to *track changes* in governance arrangements. With this axis, dislocatory moments which affect the configuration of a governance arrangement can be pinpointed precisely, i.e. moments in which change occurs, the moment of “aspect-change” (Norvall 2007) with regard to the way social actors articulate a specific governance arrangement. A good example might be, for instance, the provision of security. The (re)production of such arrangements can change over time or indeed suddenly through dislocatory moments, for instance events which affect the perception and evaluation of social actors with regard to the ability or legitimacy of the security-providers. Such events reveal the cracks in the formerly smooth, unproblematised configuration, they induce debates

and contestations over such governance arrangements, and will lead to a change in the governance of security.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.3. *Social Space*

However, whilst the vertical axis may be pivotal to the understanding of governance arrangements and processes according to their type of political articulations – and hence structuring effects – this axis for itself is not sufficient for the understanding of governance in its wider social context, for it tells us nothing about the spatial (re)production of governance arrangements. As should be clear by now, in our understanding governance arrangements both reproduce as well as produce social spaces. Therefore, the vertical axis needs to be complemented by a horizontal axis that captures the degree to which governance arrangements (re)produce social space.<sup>19</sup> This is a more complex dimension than may appear at first glance. The issue at stake is not merely the type of social penetration or the degree of spatial outreach that governance arrangements effect. This aspect has been already been problematised by much literature on governance, an aspect which could be termed the problem of “scaling up” of governance. The way in which we frame this horizontal dimension is more intricate and more challenging, for this axis is itself comprised of several interlinked dimensions of the production of space. Drawing heavily on the seminal work by Henri Lefèbvre (1974), we posit that any notion of governance requires an explicit conceptualisation of (social) space to illuminate in what way governance arrangements are socio-spatially produced and organised. This conceptualisation of social space requires some careful elaboration to reconstruct it properly as a concept as well as render it intelligible for our political understanding of governance.

Lefèbvre distinguishes three dimensions in the production of space, which in inimitable French elegance he conceptualises by *le perçu* (the perceived), *le conçu* (the conceived), and *le vécu* (the

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<sup>18</sup> There exists a plethora of literature on (changing forms of) security governance, especially in a context of so-called weak states. For case-studies see Harnischfeger 2003 or Förster 2010.

<sup>19</sup> As should become increasingly clear, our concept of social space does not conform to the widely received, but here contested notion of social space in Bourdieu’s sense, who conceptualises space primarily in terms of principles of differentiation and distribution and, subsequently, competition (see Bourdieu 1984).

lived).<sup>20</sup> *Le perçu* relates to the sensuously experienced and perceptible aspect of space, a dimension encompassing visual aesthetics as well as tactile, olfactory and other sensual aspects (and indeed aesthetics) of the materiality of space.<sup>21</sup> In other words, here the material production of space and its sensual perception become an own dimension of the (re)production of space. *Le conçu* relates to the production of knowledge, which makes the perception of space coherent and “whole”; this includes specific ways of “seeing”<sup>22</sup> and “knowing” space, emanating from particular rationales or world-views. *Le vécu* has been widely heralded as the most innovative dimension, denoting “lived” space as it is experienced in everyday life. It would be a mistake to reduce this dimension of lived space to merely habitual spatial practices, for here Lefèbvre emphatically draws our attention to the everyday production of the meaning of space – not through specific knowledge systems, but through daily practice, visceral experience, social imagination and artistic expression.

Returning to the heuristic typology, Lefèbvre’s concept of the production of space offers an exceptionally rich and fruitful multi-dimension capturing the (re)production of governance arrangements along a continuum between ‘bounded’ and ‘diffused’, indicating the degree to which such spaces are defined for and by social actors. On an overarching level, this dimension allows for an integration of the micro-realities of everyday life with the macro-order of society – and, we would add, with differential governance orders – and their specific temporal as well as spatial rhythms. More particularly, this axis allows statements on the materiality of governance arrangements (e.g. aesthetics, technology, etc.) organising everyday practices and their sensory experience. Secondly, it allows statements on the type of knowledge, dialectically comprising physical, mental as well as lived spaces that frame and are framed by governance arrangements. And thirdly, it allows statements on the visceral and the imaginative, creative aspect of governance arrangements, conceptualising dislocatory moments that emanate from an artistic aspect-change, the opening of new social imaginations that are inherent if not always actualised in all social space.

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<sup>20</sup> For an excellent volume on current readings of Lefèbvre see Goonewardena et al. 2008.

<sup>21</sup> To clarify a possibly ambiguous reading of Lefèbvre, space does not refer to some absolute or universal space; space in this understanding is an integral social product, shaped and created by social practices.

<sup>22</sup> The term evokes James Scott’s seminal anthropological contributions on the nexus between different kinds of knowing and power (Scott 1990, 1998, 2000). However, here “seeing” and “knowing” does not primarily refer to relations of oppression and resistance, it refers to the generic way we understand space.

A short example may help to illustrate the potential of this approach. So-called traditional hunter associations played an important role in the West-African conflict region. While their reputation in Sierra Leone and Liberia was quite ambivalent, they enjoyed much legitimacy in the rebel-held part of Côte d'Ivoire. The insurgents recognised them as an equal partner, too. Many ordinary people perceived them as the most reliable providers of security. Their judgment of what the hunters did grew out of their knowledge of habitual practices that had produced safe social spaces in the past. The iteration of such practices shaped the provision of security by the *dozo*, but it also informed the actors' imagination of how a safe social space should look like. The hunters' practice to police public space was, they claimed, based on the century old ethics of *dozo* associations of the medieval empire of Mali. Every member of the association had to take an oath on the shrine that represented the beings of the wilderness that once had permitted them to hunt and that now protected them against evil and all enemies. The *dozo* expressed their claims to this ethic of honesty, sincerity and courage through an aesthetic display of their power and identity. In particular brown trousers, a cap with cords partially covering the face and short shirts with protective "medicine" sewn in small leather bags on the tissue made it easy to identify them as *dozo*. Wherever the *dozo* were policing a village, a road or a quarter, the people welcomed them as earnest and sincere actors in this field of governance. Indeed, together with those who profited from their services and all other actors moving in that space, they produced a social space that was perceived by many as safe – as a space with a particular segmental governance arrangement. In Korhogo, a city of some 170,000 inhabitants, the rebel leaders respected this governance arrangement as a viable long-term solution. They conferred the control of the inner city entirely to the hunters, linking social space to a physical site in an insightful example of a bounded governance arrangement.

### **3. Conclusions**

To conclude at least preliminarily the theorisation of governance by casting our eye over these two main dimensions of political articulations and social space, the heuristic typology lays out a dense analytical net that captures fundamental political as well as spatial aspects of governance arrangements. We believe the heuristic typology is of particular analytical innovation, for it allows to both theoretically inquire into as well as empirically explore some key issues that are of central concern in the coordination between social actors and provision of public goods.

In particular, these include:

- Institutionalisation: The prime articulations and spaces defining the institutionalisation and sedimentation of governance arrangements, and the dialectics shaping this relationship.
- Dynamics: The dislocations and trajectories of such arrangements.
- Emergence and outreach: The specific operations and dimensions shaping the (re)production of governance arrangements.

We believe that this typology contributes a first and novel step in a powerful theoretical analysis of agency, politics and governance. But by way of rounding off his section, however, some key misunderstandings concerning governance need to be addressed; more specifically, we shall take this opportunity to outline what our typology does *not* capture, at the same time endeavouring to clarify what we hope it *does* capture:

Firstly, conventional attributes of governance arrangements, such as their effectiveness, accountability, or legitimacy, are not made explicit within these four dimensions. Although it may be redundant, we mention this because governance is all too often equated with or at least viewed through the lens of these attributes. However, more often than not these are very misleading terms.<sup>23</sup> In addition, it should be clear by now that our perspective is grounded in a phenomenological approach, paying particular attention to actors and agency framing governance. Here the question of perceptions and interpretations of what constitutes both problems as well as “effective”, “accountable” or “legitimate” solutions is of particular importance. Therefore, the inclusion of such terms in a heuristic typology would obscure more than it would illuminate, imposing categories rather than revealing them. This premise is central at this stage of the analysis, in which the fundamental cornerstones of the theoretical framework and analytical strategy are laid out in an explicitly non-normative way.

However, it does not preclude in any way that at a later stage of the empirical inquiry and subsequent analysis further, more refined analytical grids are applied to the findings. On the contrary, it is conceivable and probably even necessary to develop explicitly normative lenses through which further aspects can be assessed. At this point we only posit that a non-normative

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<sup>23</sup> Suffice to mention the body of Foucauldian deconstructions of dominant discourses. See Ferguson 1990 and Escobar 1995 for seminal contributions to development theory.

foundation is necessary to pre-empt a fundamental bias and blindness, and to make any normative analysis explicit in later stages. In our view this greatly strengthens the analytical force of the framework whilst retaining an elasticity with regard to the inclusion of further, empirically open aspects such as (perceptions of) effectiveness or legitimacy.

Secondly, in the same vein the analysis of power relations is implicit in the heuristic grid. As was elaborated above, power suffuses all dimensions of the typology, which shapes and (re)produces governance arrangements in specific and often constructive ways. An analysis of the specific nature of power again requires a fine-tuning of the analytical lens, focusing on the elements framing agency enabled by and enabling both governance processes, more sedimented governance arrangements, as well as particular dislocatory moments.

Thirdly, this typology reveals nothing about the type of actors involved in governance processes and their agency. The reason is not that we feel a typology of actors is irrelevant; however, for the actor-oriented conceptualisation of governance driving our approach, we feel that a more careful reflection on actors with regard to governance on the one hand and with regard to agency on the other hand needs to be undertaken. Beyond the question of “types” of actors according to sector or rationale, that frequently are not very helpful in terms of their empirical referents, this theorisation and embedding of actors, governance and agency will be outlined in a separate contribution (for a preliminary outline see Förster/Koechlin 2011).

With these disclaimers, we argue that the heuristic typology (Figure 1), linking the degree of political articulations with the production of space by governance processes elegantly cuts through several Gordian knots of conventional governance concepts. It overcomes the problem of unreflected normativity; it allows for the empirical assessment of types, trajectories and spatial production of governance processes; and it also allows for a more subtle empirical analysis of power framing governance configurations. Importantly, the assessment of governance processes does not derive from their location within the matrix. On the contrary: against the backdrop of a non-normative analytical grid, at each subsequent analytical step governance processes can be assessed from an emic as well as an etic perspective. Governance thus sheds its functionalist skin and re-emerges as a sophisticated concept through which processes addressing the resolution of societal problems can be understood in terms of their structuring effect on agency, their political effects of social transformation as well as their socio-spatial (dis)integrative force.

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