

# Spatial Inequalities in the Political Economy of Africa

Starting in March 2018 and running for three years, Professor Catherine Boone (c.boone@lse.ac.uk) is leading the ESRC-funded project on Spatial Inequalities in the Political Economy of Africa (£998,000). This is a collaborative effort between scholars in the UK, US, Kenya, and Côte d'Ivoire: co-PIs are Leigh Gardner in Economic History (EH) at the LSE, Fibian Lukalo at the National Land Commission of Kenya (NLC), Michael Wahman in Political Science at Michigan State University, Andrew Linke in Geography at University of Utah.

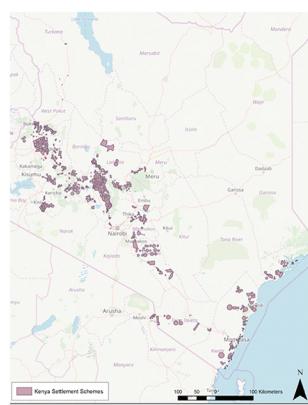
Team members and project collaborators include Sandra Joireman and the Spatial Analysis Lab at the University of Richmond; post-doctoral Research Fellow in the LSE Government Department, Stephan Kyburz; Paris School of Economics PhD student Juliette Crespin-Boucaud and Economic Historian Alex Moradi; and PhD research assistants in EH, Geography, and Psychology at the LSE (Jennifer Kohler, Yohan Iddawela, Matt Benson, Joel Suss), at the NLC in Kenya (Paddy Makene and Sheila Pamba), and in the MA program in Human Rights at CERAP in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (Aristide Dion, Irigo Zibo, and Ismael Sanogo). Eva Richter, LSE undergraduate in International Relations, is an RA.



## Project objectives

The project explores the role of inequalities across subnational regions of African countries in shaping patterns of electoral competition, political mobilisation, and policy preferences. Regionalised competition has been systematically overlooked in political science theories of electoral competition and political mobilisation in Africa. We document patterns of regionalised competition that are evident in persistent regional bloc voting across ten African countries selected on the basis of their representativeness, and aim to show

that these express economic and institutional cleavages that have been largely missed in political science research on Africa. Core-periphery tensions in particular give rise to divergent regional ideologies and policy preferences over distributive policies, land policy, and even basic constitutional choices. We argue that systematic uncovering of the causes and political effects of spatial inequalities will have important consequences for the conclusions we draw from existing data on political mobilisation and competition in countries marked by uneven development.

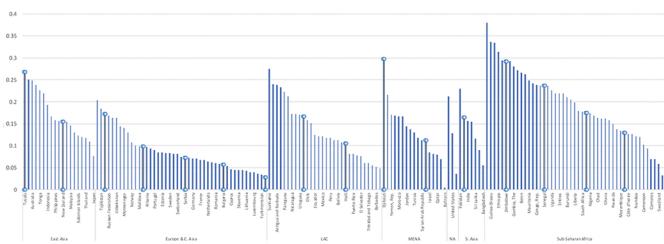


## Research Strategy

We are building new datasets to describe spatial inequalities and regionalism in African countries, and to uncover the economic and institutional attributes thereof. So far we are focusing on constituency-level electoral data, which we use to track regional bloc voting; georeferenced colonial administrative data to track internal boundary persistence over time; land allocation records (for Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire) to examine the politics of land allocation and territorial strategies of political control. The outcomes of interest have to do with electoral politics and coalition

formation, resource allocation preferences, and preferences over constitutional design. The goal is to develop theory and data strategies that make it possible to extend our analyses to a wider sample of countries both within Africa and in other settings where political

identities and interests are strongly territorial. Our arguments challenge theories that see ethnic competition as the fundamental driver of politics in African and in other countries that are marked by low levels of national economic integration.



## Publications

C. Boone and R. Simson. "Regional Inequalities in African Political Economy: Theory, Conceptualization, Measurement, and Political Effects." LSE Dept. of International Development Working Paper, March 2019.

C. Boone and M. Wahman, "Regional Inequalities and the Shaping of African Electoral Competition: The Political Geography of Electoral Coalitions in Africa, A paper presented at the Annual meetings of the African Studies Association, Atlanta, GA, 30 November 2018

C. Boone, F. Lukalo and S. Joireman, "Promised Land: Kenya's Settlement Schemes, 1962-2016." Under review.

C. Boone with Brice Bado, Aristide Dion et Irigo Zibo, "Push, Pull, and Push-back to Land Certification: Regional dynamics in pilot certification projects in Côte d'Ivoire," Under review.

C. Boone, "Internal Borders and the Building-Blocs of Territorialized Representation in African Countries," a paper presented at the 2018 Annual meeting of the American Political Science Assn. (APSA), Boston, 1 Sept. 2018.

J. Bolt and L. Gardner, "African institutions under colonial rule", CEPR Discussion Paper DP14198 (December 2019)

von Borzyskowski, I. and M. Wahman. "Systematic Measurement Error in Election Violence Data: Causes and Consequences." *British Journal of Political Science*. (Online Early View December 2019)

Wahman, M. and E. Goldring. Forthcoming. "Pre-Electoral Violence and Territorial Control: Political Dominance and Subnational Election Violence in Africa." *Journal of Peace Research* (forthcoming)

## Impact

We aim to bring political science theories of electoral and policy competition in territorially-divided countries to the study of Africa, and reciprocally, to use African countries to better understand the political consequences of geographically-uneven economic development. Our data include the first-ever georeferenced database on Kenya's 500 settlement schemes which were created over the 1960-2018 period, which has the potential to dramatically transform land policy debates in Kenya, as well as new georeferenced datasets on internal border persistence and change in our subsample of countries. We are creating socio-economic data for electoral constituencies in Africa where none has previously existed, opening new possibilities for understanding the socio-economic correlates of electoral behaviour and policy preferences. Our land policy data directly challenge the spatially-uniform prognoses and predictions that are employed to justify Africa's current wave of land law reform.



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