

Preface

The reorganisation of bureaucracies according to neo-liberal principles is a global phenomenon. We, as employees and clients of public services, universities, development agencies and NGOs are influenced by these institutions and their policies in a myriad of unforeseen ways, but our mundane acts also shape the ways in which they operate and affect our lives. It is the aim of this study to contribute to an understanding of the links between quotidian practices and global processes, between the micro-level of individual day-to-day tactics and the macro-level of development discourse. It does so by focusing on this dynamics in a particular site and point of time, the urban areas of Lilongwe and Zomba at the turn to the 21st century.

During my fieldwork in Lilongwe and Zomba it soon became clear that these connections were far more complicated and elusive than anticipated. In the encounter with “the field” assumptions on the causal relations between policy measures and people’s actions evaporated and gave way to a far more complex and subtle connectedness. Hence, the main challenge writing this book was how to conceptualise the “impact” of “tools” such as Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), Poverty Reduction Strategy and Fiscal Restructuring and Deregulation on civil servants in Malawi’s urban areas and the ways they transformed these “tools” during implementation.

By following them on their movements between workplace, neighbourhood, church, home village, garden and business; by talking to experts of various *couleur*, by delving into circulars and documents, and by studying colonial and postcolonial history, a more layered image gradually emerged, which was not represented by organisational charts, implementation plans and strategy papers and I sincerely hope that this book succeeds in presenting a more accurate image of civil servants’ everyday experiences in the shadow of Good Governance.

Without the help of all the people I met in the course of this project, it would not have been possible to write this book. Over the years I have incurred a great many debts of which I am able to acknowledge only a few here. First I am grateful to Director Stanley Khaila and Senior Registrar Felix Msamba at the Centre for Social Research (CSR) in Zomba for granting me the status of affiliated researcher and their support during my stay in Malawi. Further I want to thank Wycliffe Chilowa, Alister Munthali and Anne O'Donnell at the CSR for their support and many stimulating discussions.

A special debt is owed to Pauline Peters who provided much-needed guidance at an early stage of my fieldwork when she emphasised the importance of family networks, church and class formation for any study of civil servants in Malawi. Further I want to express my gratitude to Lynnda Proulx, Jessica Fehringer, Macha Roesink, Renate Kirsch and especially Dieter and Lidette Horneber for their generous support. Sandra Stohl at the German Embassy in Lilongwe deserves special mentioning for her support, which was most welcome when I was wrongfully accused of an "act likely to cause industrial unrest" after my arrest at a peaceful demonstration of the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions in May 2000.

Milton Kutengule was extremely helpful in sharpening my research questions during an intensive week in Norwich before my trip to Malawi. I also want to thank his colleagues Chris Paine and Cliff Chiunda at the National Economic Council in Lilongwe. The local World Bank office and the Department of Human Resource Management and Development kindly allowed me to use their libraries. I am also grateful to Mercy Kanyuka at the National Statistics Office, Major Kumwenda in Zomba and Fidelis Edge Kanyongolo at Chancellor College. Special thanks go to Mrs. Kholowa for the patience she displayed during our Chichewa-lessons.

To all the civil servants who agreed to become informants I owe a great debt for their remarkable kindness and patience in dealing with my requests for information. Their support and openness is much appreciated and I hope that this book contributes to a better understanding of what life in the shadow of Good Governance is like. I hope that at least some of them will be able to read it in the future and I will make sure that there will be copies available in the libraries of Chancellor College and the CSR.

Harri Englund, John McCracken and the other participants of the *International Conference on Historical and Social Science Research in Malawi: Problems and Prospects*, held at Chancellor College in Zomba, 26-29 June, 2000, were so kind to provide insightful comments on my preliminary research findings. Especially Harri Englund was very supportive when I revised my contribution for the conference volume (Anders 2002).

Among all the Malawians who helped me, I am most indebted to Orison and Jean Chaponda. I could always count on their hospitality, support, reflection, and, last but not least, their very entertaining company. I would like to thank them for adopting me and making me always feel at home. I am also grateful to Akwere, who acted as my patient and good-humoured teacher during my initiation into the secret science of *nyau* in the shadow of *ngala ya pakamwa*, his son, the young Chief Chipaka, and Chief Liwonde. Marty and Michelle Otanez were so kind to film the event.

In Europe I was able to benefit from a wide network of colleagues. In Rotterdam I could not wish for better colleagues than the three musketeers at the department of international law at Erasmus University, Juan Amaya-Castro, Miklos Redner and Olaf Kwast, with whom I could discuss every topic, ranging from theoretical concepts to empirical details. I am indebted to Keebet and Franz von Benda-Beckmann for inviting me to the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology in Halle where my thinking was thoroughly anthropologised in numerous lectures and staff seminars. There I found a circle of researchers from whom I learnt a great deal and who were especially rewarding company during my stays in Halle. In particular I would like to thank Julia Eckert, Bertram Turner, Michaela Pelican, Andreas Dafinger, Andrea Behrends and Dereje Feyissa.

In the Netherlands I benefited from participating in the Africanist PhD-seminar organised by Peter Geschiere and Jan Jansen and many discussions with Joris van de Sandt, Rachel Spronk and Barbara Oomen. Julia Hornberger stands out as a friend and colleague whose perceptive comments and rigorous thinking always pushed my line of argument further. I am grateful to Agnes Schreiner and André Hoekema for introducing me to the anthropology of law. The intellectual support and friendship of colleagues in

the Netherlands, Austria, France and the United Kingdom like Monique Nuijten, Barbara Rohregger, Giorgio Blundo, Deborah James and David Mosse is also highly appreciated.

It is impossible to have better supervisors than Ellen Hey and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, who were always prepared to discuss my work, to provide help whenever it was needed, and who always believed in this project. Marlies Gromicho-Kok provided much appreciated secretarial help in the final phase of this project. Special thanks go to Eileen Moyer who performed the task of proofreading and language editing with admirable efficiency. Shalini Randeria was very supportive when she even encouraged the negligence of my official duties when I needed extra time to finalise this book. There are many others close to me to thank but I would like to single out my parents and my brother for their support of this project. Finally, this list would not be complete without thanking Eliane Smits van Waesberghe for her faith in me and her support of a project that often took priority over everything else.