



A smarter approach to governance in Africa

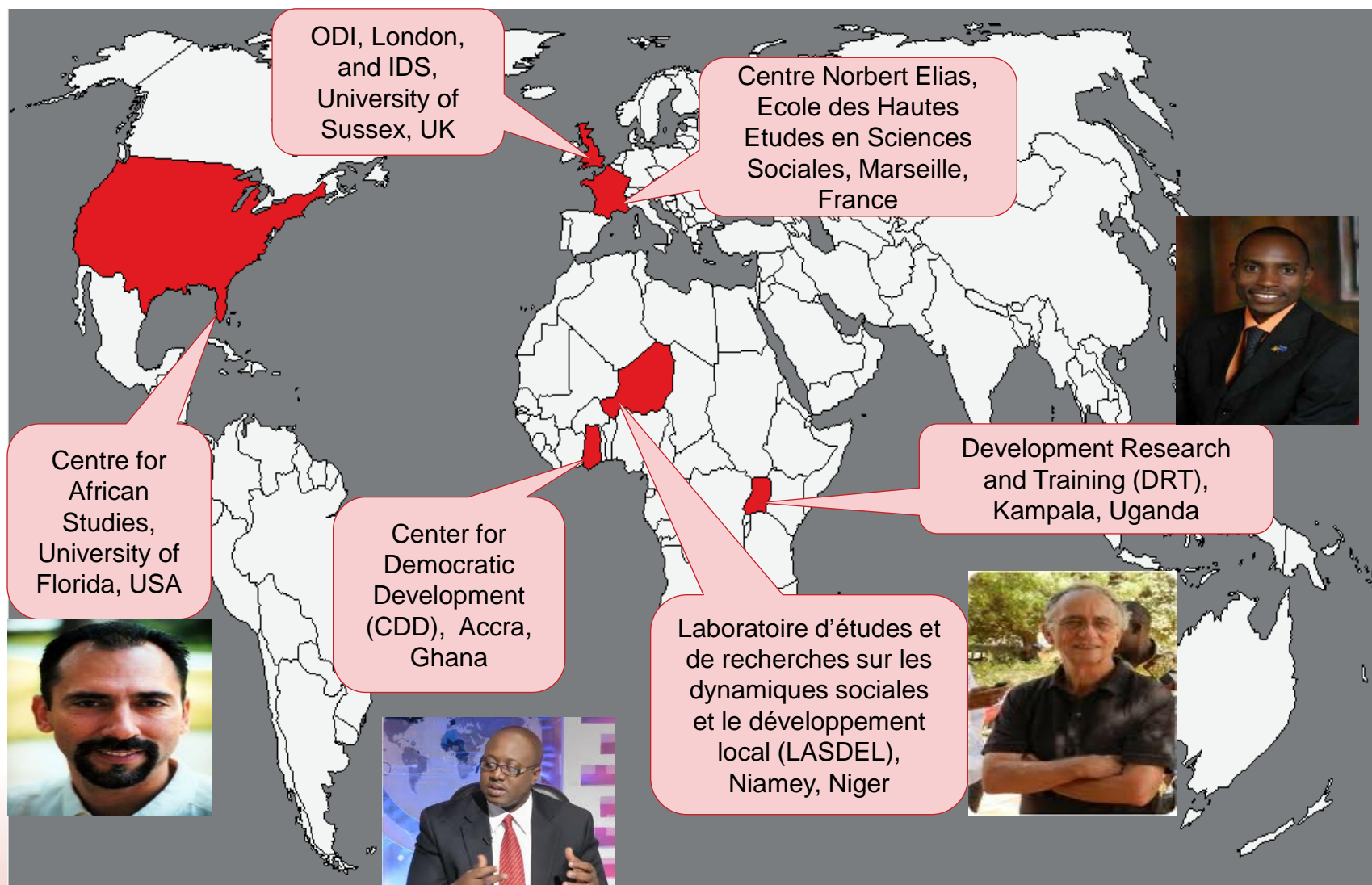
Launching the APPP synthesis
report

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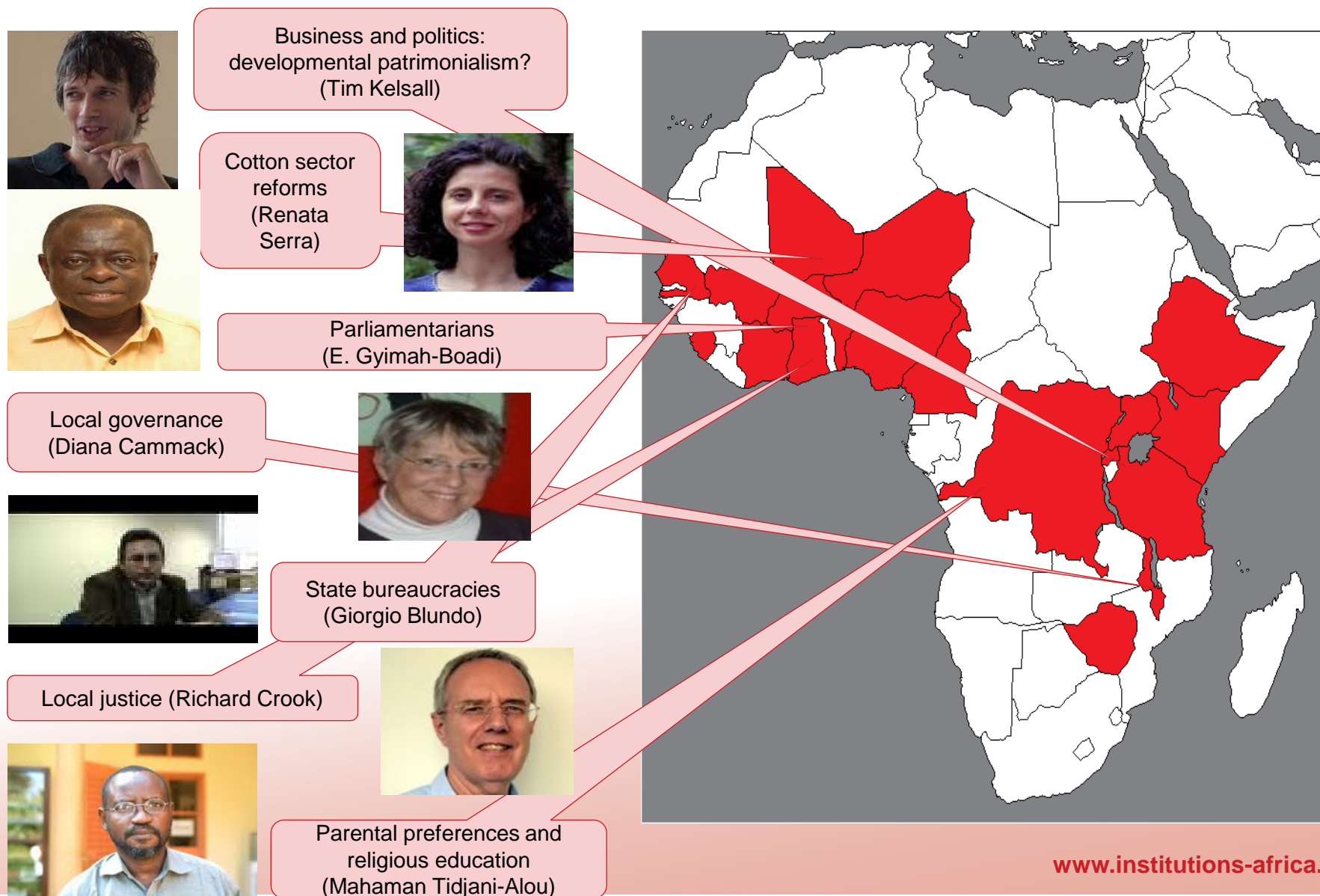
Overseas Development Institute, London,
23 Oct 2012

APPP partners

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APPP countries, people and research streams



The hypotheses

- Neopatrimonial political systems are more varied than is commonly supposed
- 'Good governance' does not specify well the governance qualities that are important for development
- Better results would be obtained by 'working with the grain' of African societies

Some headline findings from the research streams, 1

- The differences between the more developmental and less developmental forms of neopatrimonialism are really important
 - Economic transformation (capitalist development) will begin in Africa as it did in Asia and Europe, under neopatrimonial auspices
 - Prior achievement of ‘good governance’ is not a necessary condition
 - In APPP study countries, the provision of basic public goods is crucially affected by:
 - the extent of policy incoherence
 - the degree to which providers are disciplined, and
 - the space for local problem-solving
 - Current forms of developmental neopatrimonialism do much better than average in these respects

Some headline findings from the research streams, 2

- Under normal conditions, democratisation produces a competitive clientelism that is too short-termist to be developmental
- As a rule, citizen and voter power are weak drivers of better state performance
- In spite of everything, however, problem-solving initiatives and ‘local reforms’ do happen
- When these succeed, they often take the form of ‘practical hybrids’ – by way of modern state capabilities adapting to local preferences

So what?

What's new here?

What does it add up to?

What difference does it make to
anything that matters?

Much of it is the subject of an expert consensus

- Good governance (or mimicry of Northern ‘best practice’ institutions) doesn’t work, isn’t realistic, isn’t necessary and causes overload
- Needed: case by case diagnostics to achieve ‘good fit’ with needs and possibilities
- But:
 - As Grindle says, the experts haven’t done enough to spell out implications of ‘good fit’: it’s not practical to study every case
 - Much of the recent governance programming, influenced by good fit, looks a lot like the old kind
 - Even the best country activists and donor advisers have real trouble imagining what to do differently
- So there is something missing: what needs to be added?

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Governance challenges are not fundamentally about one set of people getting another set of people to behave better. They are about both sets of people finding ways of being able to act collectively in their own best interests.

Putting it more technically

- Despite ‘good fit’, most reform thinking and governance programming has remained stuck in one form or another of *principal-agent* perspective – and this is not realistic
- There needs to be more recognition that governance limitations stem from difficult and interconnected *collective action problems* affecting both elites and masses – which are in principle soluble

What's out, then?

- 1) 'Supply side' principal-agent approaches that assume there is a real political commitment to reform and the problem is just one of compliance and 'information asymmetry' down the chain of command
- 2) The typical 'demand for good governance' alternative, which just turns principal-agent upside down, treating citizens, voters or service users as 'principals' seeking to get compliance from politicians and civil servants
- 3) (Less obviously) the influential idea that it is a sufficient solution to *combine* supply-side and demand-side interventions without addressing the lack of realism involved in this conceptualisation

NB: This builds on the findings of the IDS Future State and Citizenship centres but adds an important element that has been missing from the way these have been taken up!

What's in?

- Collective action concept in the technical sense of Olson and Ostrom – the de-motivating effect of the free-rider problem on the provision of collective benefits
- **NB:** this type of diagnostic is not limited to local communities and natural resources, but applies to heterogeneous communities of interest at all levels, including public sector reform (Geddes, Gibson et al), elite bargains (Lewis, Keefer)

How does this overarching message relate to the research stream findings?

- It provides a useful handle on why developmental patrimonialisms sometimes happen, but are exceptional
- It provides a powerful and 'sympathetic' understanding of why thoroughly bad governance is so common, and how this might be addressed
- It suggests a realistic yet practical alternative to the current wave of naïve social accountability and democratic deepening programmes
- It provides a solid, non-culturalist, understanding of 'going with the grain': 'practical hybrid' solutions are needed because it is socially too costly to invent effective institutions from scratch

If we are right, there are big implications for the development business

- The conventional (principal-agent) approaches take reform into relatively generic territory
- Addressing collective action problems, on the other hand, is much more challenging – solutions only work if they deal with the specifics of each situation
- That means
 - ✓ getting embedded and acquiring local knowledge,
 - ✓ being highly ‘adaptive’ (Pritchett)
- The conventional approaches provide apparent justifications for large volumes of country-programmable aid
 - Yet there is much evidence, from macro (van de Walle et al) to micro (Bano et al), that donor funds can kill collective action
- Therefore, two things need to happen ...

- 1 Ministers, parliaments and voting publics at both ends of the development assistance relationship need to be convinced that development progress is about overcoming institutional blockages, usually underpinned by collective action problems.

This should be the focus of any post-2015 campaigns – not ‘more money’

2 More development support should be provided at 'arm's length' by organisations that may be aid-funded but

- a. solve problems as they find them on the ground, rather than advancing a pre-fabricated influencing agenda
- b. do not have to disburse funds
- c. are free to use monitoring for learning and adaptation
- d. have relevant technical knowledge, but also facilitation skills
- e. recruit staff with local knowledge and long-term country commitments
- f. answer to local stakeholders (as a guarantee of the above)

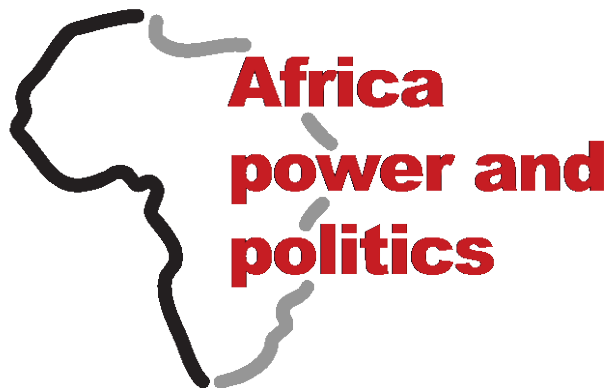
Thank you

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The Africa Power and Politics Programme is a consortium research programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Irish Aid for the benefit of developing countries.

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