

What makes local government work?

Social capital, leadership, participation and ownership in Benin

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Netherlands

Development

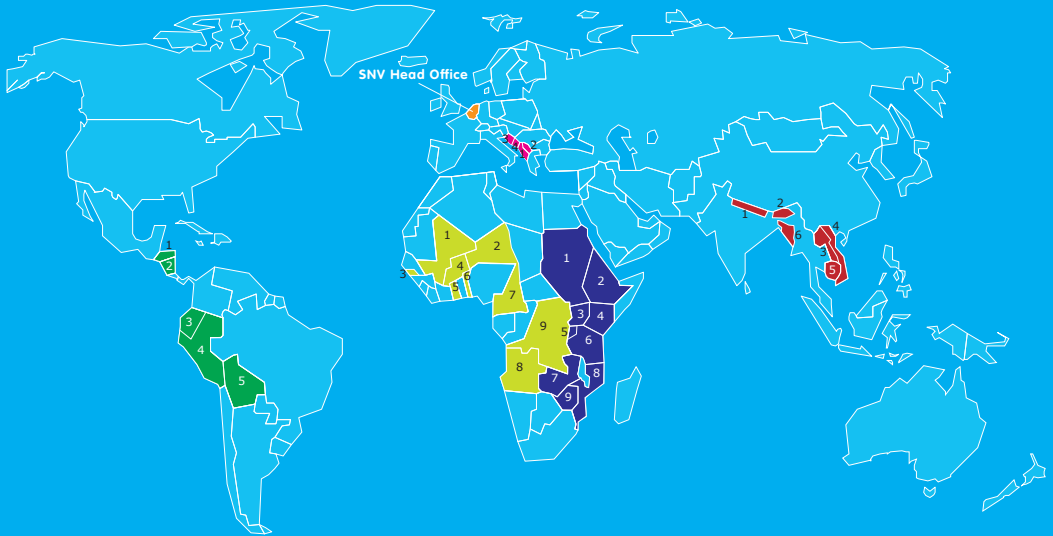
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Abstract

The basic question of the study is to measure the impact of capacity development programmes on the municipal performance to improve the economy, the health and education, as well as the living conditions of its citizens. Benin's municipalities use a municipal development plan to achieve this improvement. What is the relation between the performance in implementing the municipal plan and the level of social capital, the quality of leadership, the use of participatory approaches and the feeling of ownership? This study answers this question using proxy indicators for these concepts.

1 Introduction

Decentralisation has often been advocated by donors and development agencies as a panacea for facilitating development. It would promote participation, bring the government closer to people, improve the delivery of public services, and thereby contribute to poverty reduction. However, research showed that if decentralisation takes place in an environment of weak institutions and political conflict, it may actually make matters worse (Jutting et al. 2004). But in Benin, where institutions are not strong, decentralisation is not an option anymore; it is a fact. It took 10 years of debate, preparation, and external pressure, and finally in 2003 elected municipal councils and mayors were installed. The general consensus among policy makers, civil servants and advisors was: whether we like it or not, it is there and we have to make it work.

The newly elected mayors of Benin's 77 municipalities¹ were confronted with a local administration and a budget not suited to the tasks for which they were responsible, according to the decentralisation law. From 2003 all the municipalities received technical assistance from government support structures and from

1 In this article "municipality" (English), will be used to refer to "commune" (French).

bilateral programmes. The first two years the assistance concentrated on the elaboration of development plans, improving the quality of the local administration, and increasing the local revenues and the municipal budget. In 2004 nearly all councils adopted their 5 year development plan and started implementing it. Now, in 2006, it is time for a first assesment. How did the new municipalities perform, and what influenced their performance?

2 Research question and methodology

2.1 Measuring performance

Not all municipalities are alike and so neither is their performance. Performance measurement of local governments is an area of study in its own right, for which many tools and instruments have been developed.² Putnam studied the performance of regional governments in Italy since 1970, whose introduction gave democratically controlled authorities at the regional level power and access to money (Putnam 1993). Putnam assesses their performance against their ability to attract and use funds to improve public services. In the present study the performance of local governments is defined in a similar way: that is as the extent to which the municipal development plan is being implemented. A municipal development plan consists of a large number of activities and investments grouped into sectoral programmes. These aim to improve the economy, the living conditions of its citizens and the education and health systems (Slootweg 2006). The assumption is that a local government that is able to mobilise people and financial resources will perform better than a local government that is not. The question is: what makes it work?

2.2 Explaining performance

This question is taken up by Putnam comparing regions in Italy and by Fukuyama comparing countries (Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 1995).

2 A good example is Local Governance Barometer developed by the "Impact Alliance" (see www.impactalliance.org).

Though their approach differs, both conclude that performance is stimulated by "social capital", which in turn depends on the existence of an active and organised civil society and a high level of "trust" in society. Promoting social capital subsequently became important in the field of development. Sander and Lownee of Harvard University introduced the "Social Capital Building Toolkit" and define social capital as "the social networks and the norms of trustworthiness and reciprocity that arises from them" (2003: 2). The World Bank developed the "Social Capital Assessment Tool" (Grootaert et al. 2004). Putnam and Fukuyama basically do uphold that trust/norms of reciprocity precede the emergence of civil society, whereas the Capacity Development programmes like those of the World Bank or Harvard aim to create civil society in the hope civil society creates trust and norms.

The notion of social capital is not the only factor used to explain performance of local governments. Dissatisfied with the results of technical cooperation, the UNDP embarked on an ambitious research project. Elliot Berg (1993) started the discussion with his book "Rethinking Technical Cooperation". This sparked the UNDP research programme "Reforming Technical Cooperation for Capacity Development" with three reports: "Capacity for Development" (Fukuda-Parr et al. 2002); "Developing Capacity through Technical Cooperation" (Browne 2002) and "Ownership, Leadership and Transformation" (Lopes and Theison 2003). *Ownership and leadership* are put forward as drivers of change: "Leaders can make transformation happen because they have the courage to take risks, expand implementation, overcome obstacles and empower others" (Lopes and Theison 2003: 35). In this study the term "ownership" will be used to refer to people's knowledge, appreciation and engagement with the "ideas and strategies (...) processes (...) resources (... and) outcomes" as elaborated in a municipal development plan (Lopes and Theison 2003: 30).

In many processes, ownership is linked to *participation* in the sense that it is a means to increase ownership. To give an example from Benin, PRODECOM³ covers the following capacity development

3 Le PROgramme d'appui au DEmarrage des COMMunes PRODECOM of the Beninese Government was financed between 2004 and 2006 by the European Union.

services: participative planning; management of local finances; civil administration and local communication and argues that “la municipalit   doit promouvoir une d  mocratie locale de type participatif” (Prodecom 2004).⁴ In other words, it tries to promote participation, and thereby ownership over the programming, organising, and financing of development initiatives. Another example is SNV-Benin, which makes ownership and participation its *raison d’  tre*: “The involvement of the population in decision taking concerning investments will increase the possibility they feel really involved, and consequently are more willing to contribute to the costs of the investments and of the maintenance” (Weinsou et al. 2006: 30). A direct link is expected by this form of capacity development and the performance of local government to improve on service delivery. Easterly strongly questions the way participation and ownership are used in Poverty Reduction Strategy procedures and in the proposals of the UN Millennium Project for implementing the Millennium Development Goals: “Unfortunately, decades of participation rhetoric have not changed the balance of power in foreign aid” (2006:197).

2.3 Research question

This study aims to evaluate whether the performance of local government, understood here as the capacity to implement the municipal development plan, is correlated with a municipality’s level of social capital, leadership, participation and ownership.

The hypothesis is that municipalities that are more successful at implementing their plan will have more social capital, more effective leadership and a higher degree of participation and ownership. And a confirmed hypothesis will underpin the thesis that capacity development programmes are on the right track.

2.4 Research process

The article is based on research by Jolanda Groen and Xavier Llopart from Utrecht University (the Netherlands), in collaboration with Marl  ne Ahonkp   and Averin Aw  l   from Benin. It was conducted

4 “The municipality must promote a participative local government”

between March and May 2006 in 20 municipalities in the South of Benin.⁵ The research was guided and supervised by Sef Sloomweg from SNV, the Netherlands Development Organisation, in collaboration with la Maison des Collectivités Locales.⁶ The students worked in couples and stayed in each municipality during at least two days to obtain the necessary information.

Two questionnaires were prepared.⁷ The first was used to collect input from staff of the municipal administration responsible for guiding the development and/or implementation of the plan. The answers reflect their knowledge and competence and, when available, the quality of key documents related to the development plan and to the municipal budget expenditure. One questionnaire was used per municipality.

The second questionnaire was used to gather individual input, during sessions with three different groups:

1. Staff of the municipal administration and de-concentrated state services who are involved in the development plan;
2. Members of the municipal council;
3. Representatives of civil society, for example, members of the municipal development committee or the market women association, the associations for youth, craftsmen or transport services. Local NGO's were also part of this group.

The municipalities were asked to select respondents. This was done to ensure that the interviewees were familiar with the municipal development plan, and involved in its preparation and/or implementation. The reason for this choice was that we wanted to measure the involvement in the process of those active in the community. This research therefore reflects the knowledge, ideas and opinions of the active people involved in the development process,

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- 5 Bénin has 12 "Départements" and 77 "Communes". The research covered 20 out of 28 municipalities from the 4 southern Départements Mono, Couffo, Ouémé and Plateau. SNV has accompanied 12 of the 20 municipalities to elaborate the municipal development plan.
 - 6 The « Maison des Collectivités Locales » is a state organisation created to provide technical assistance to municipalities.
 - 7 Questionnaire 1; Responsibles for the Municipal Development Plan; Questionnaire 2: For civil servants; council members and representatives of civil society. Both can be obtained on request from the authors.

and does not seek representativity for all council members, civil servants or the population as a whole.

2.5 Response

A total of 20 municipalities were included in this study. Even though all municipalities expressed their willingness to cooperate, their actual level of participation varied, and not all were able to provide the information requested. This can partly be explained by the limited number of qualified staff, and the need to set priorities. However, it can also partly be due to a lack of information or a lack of will to share this.

The second questionnaire was completed by 318 individuals: 76 councillors, 124 civil servants and 118 active members of civil society (Annex, table 1). The number of response in the municipality of Sèmè-Podji was unfortunately so low that the results could not be used. In the other municipalities, the number of respondents ranged from 6 to 33 with an unequal participation of the three groups. The averages for the whole municipality may therefore be influenced by this unequal partition. The unequal participation of women (15%) and men (85%) creates a bias towards male ideas and experiences with the municipal development process. The small numbers per municipality do not permit to compare the answers of the three different groups in each municipality. An analysis of the answers of the three groups can be found in the full report (Ahokpe et al. 2006).

3 Results

3.1 Measuring concepts

To realise its development plan, a municipality needs to: 1) define who is responsible for its coordination and implementation; 2) set up committees that regularly bring these responsible actors together; and 3) produce transparent reports that explain the progress made, including the degree to which all activities and investments included in the plan are being realised (both in number and financial terms). Thus, to measure the *performance* of a local government requires looking at two sets of variables: one set related to plan related

disbursements and activities; the other concerned with transparency and a clear process of implementation.

In the present study, *social capital* is measured first in terms of the occurrence of “bridging social capital”. Sander and Lowney give the following definitions: bridging social capital are “social ties that link people together with others across a cleavage that typically divides society”. This opposed to bonding social capital that “ties people together with others that are primarily like them” (2003: 23). The second variable is the commonness of the feeling that the community, rather than external actors, is responsible for improving its living conditions. Third is the prevalence of trust in the municipality, measured in terms of the level of confidence people have in their fellow citizens. Fourth, social capital is evaluated in terms of the occurrence of conflict in society. Conflicts are an indication that people are spending time on fighting and resolving internal problems rather than on development initiatives.⁸

The quality of *leadership* is measured by 1) the mayor’s capacity to share responsibilities; 2) the perception of the incidence of corruption; and 3) people’s confidence in the decisions of their local government.

The level of *participation* is assessed against four sets of indicators: 1) the level of accountability of authorities towards the population and other development actors about their actions and expenditures; 2) whether or not people can participate in decisions relating to development issues; 3) whether the respondents to the questionnaire (which are all considered important development actors) actually participated in the development planning process; and 4) whether they are satisfied with the possibility provided for participation of citizens in development issues.

To measure *ownership*, the respondents’ knowledge and understanding of the municipal development plan was analysed.

8 Harmful conflicts are to be differentiated from healthy competition which can be positive for creating social capital.

Measuring is often easier said than done. In many cases, proxy indicators were used.⁹ A 'proxy' does not measure the "thing" itself but something else that represents the "thing". In the case of Social Capital, Leadership, Participation and Ownership it is open to debate whether the information collected and the means of analysis result in good proxies.

3.2 Performance

Performance is assessed on the basis of the answers to the first questionnaire. In most cases this questionnaire was completed by civil servants responsible for the coordination and implementation of the development plan and for its financial administration. With one exception, the mayors were not involved. The quality of the answers varies with the amount of effort made by the authorities to collect the necessary information.

Activities and financial indicators

Performance is understood here as the ability to report on the progress made in implementing the plan. This can be done in two ways: by reporting on the number of activities planned for 2005 that have been executed partly or completely or by specifying the expenditures related to these activities. It was not easy to collect this information. Fourteen out of twenty municipalities were able to provide information concerning the number of activities (partly) implemented in 2005 (Annex, table 2). Twelve were able to indicate which part of the municipal budget for 2005 was reserved to implement the plan, and nine provided input on actual budget expenditures on the plan in 2005 (Annex, table 3). The quality of this information was not always comparable across municipalities. Some grouped activities together or provided only raw estimations of activities and costs.

9 A document explaining how the different questions were used to arrive at indicators for performance, social capital, leadership, participation and ownership can be obtained from the authors.

Table 1: Performance index

Department	Municipality	I Revenue index	II Transparency index	III Process index	I/2+ II+III Performance index	Ranking Performance index
		Correlation with Performance Index				
		0,8472263	0,5405118	0,4279382		
Couffo	Aplahoué	74,9%	17	2	57	16
	Djakotomé	75,2%	25	24*	86	4*
	Dogbo	79,7%	17	14	71	13
	Klouékanmé	64,6%	27*	14	74	10
	Lalo	72,2%	24	13	73	11
Mono	Athiémé	111,2%*	13	11	80	7
	Comé	81,7%	15	10	66	14
	Grand-Popo	78,7%	15	11	66	15
	Houéyogbé	64,1%	19	1	52	17
	Lokossa	74,3%	27*	15	79	8
Ouémé	Adjarra	114,6%*	25	17*	100	1*
	Akpro-Missérété	73,2%	28*	11	75	9
	Avrankou	82,0%*	23	23*	87	2*
	Bonou	n.a.	14	13	27	19
	Sème-Podji					
Plateau	Adja-Ouèrè	n.a.	21	18*	39	18
	Ifangni	64,6%	25	14	72	12
	Kétou	95,7%*	24	15	87	3*
	Pobè	85,9%*	27*	14	84	5*
	Sakété	61,6%	26*	23*	80	6

* = among first 5 in column

■ = first five in the Performance index

n.a. = not available

Due to unreliable information, the original idea of ranking municipalities according to activities implemented and financial resources expended would have excluded many municipalities. So an alternative was needed to rate municipal performance in financial terms. The only option was to use the budget 2005 figures, since these are subject to rather strict controls by the supervising central authorities. Data on 'functioning costs' included in the primary and realised budgets for 2005 provide reasonably consistent information about expected and realised revenues for the functioning of the

municipality. These costs include internal tax and non-tax revenues and external state subsidies, which makes them good indicators of a municipality's capacity to realise its expected revenues. Good policy can increase revenues over the years. If revenue realisation is high and exceeds expectations, this is often a sign that a municipality is successful in increasing revenues. A low realisation rate indicates that the revenue estimation was too optimistic, or that revenues regressed. These two figures are used for the "Revenue index" (see Table 1).

Transparency

If a municipality takes its development plan seriously, it will analyse yearly what has been realised, what this has cost, what activities should be removed or carried over to another year. Having information about these elements (and being prepared to share this information with, for instance, some enquiring students) is an indication that a local government is transparent about the implementation of its plan. Not having this information or being unwilling to share it indicates a lack of transparency. The information referred to can usually be found in the annual development plan and in the yearly progress report. Together these two documents make up the "Transparency index" (see table 1). The results show that not all municipalities had elaborated an annual development plan for 2005. The municipality of Athiémé had only finished its 5-year plan in 2005 and so had only worked out a yearly plan for 2006. The municipality of Grand-Popo had made a bi-annual plan for the second part of 2005 and for 2006. The municipalities that did have an annual development plan did not always analyse the results at the end of the year, let alone the costs involved (Annex, table 2).

Process

A third element providing information about a municipality's performance is a clear process and a clear identification of the actors responsible for ensuring the implementation of the development plan. Using questions related to the organisation of the steering, coordination and monitoring of the plan, a "Process index" was calculated. Combining the revenue index, the transparency index and the process index gives one performance indicator. The calculation was simple: weights were used to ensure that revenue would count more than transparency and transparency more than process. The

reasoning behind this is that performance measured on the basis of actual results (facts, financial figures) is more important than performance measured in terms of the existence of instruments and procedures. The formula used is:¹⁰

$$\text{Performance} = \text{Revenue} / 2 + \text{Transparency} + \text{Process}$$

Using this formula, four out of the five highest scoring municipalities are located in the Ouémé and the Plateau regions. The three municipalities that did not have any information available (in May of 2006) on their budget and the realisation of the 2005 budget are from the same regions and were given the lowest score.

3.3 Social capital

The second questionnaire was used to collect information from people that play an active role in the municipality, either through the administration, politics or civil society. The questions looked at how active they are and whether they are actively meeting and collaborating with people outside the (closed) community of family, friends and neighbours. This was used as an indication of "bridging social capital", which is considered an important success factor of development initiatives. On the basis of the outcome, municipalities were ranked from 1-20.¹¹ Respondents' sense of responsibility was also measured. It was considered positive when people believed their own and their community's abilities to be most important for improving their living conditions. It was considered a negative sign when they referred first to leaders or actors from outside the community to resolve their problems. This element is called the "Responsibility index". A third component of social capital is trust, that is, trust in family and friends and trust in strangers. Together these make up the "Trust index". The final element is the occurrence of conflicts. A municipality that is rife with conflicts between citizens, and between authorities and citizens, wastes energy and time trying

10 The Revenue index scores from 62 to 115; transparency from 11 to 27 and process from 1 to 23. The formula halves the weight of revenue to 31-57,5. Roughly speaking Revenue has slightly more weight than Transparency and Process together.

11 The method for ranking municipalities is used in all tables 2-5. This way it is the position in the row that gives the equal weight to all communes, and not the relative distance between them like in table 1.

to resolve these conflicts, which could otherwise have been used for development initiatives, hence the “Low Conflict index”.

Table 2: Social Capital

Department	Municipality	Respon- dents	Bridging	Responsi- bility	Trust	Low Conflict	Social Capital
			Correlation with Social Capital				
			0,5210526	0,7473684	0,7701754	0,2912281	
Couffo	Aplahoué	9	10	15	18	19	18
	Djakotomé	20	3*	6	6	12	3*
	Dogbo	9	19	5*	10	10	12
	Klouékanmé	10	9	1*	1*	15	2*
	Lalo	15	5*	3*	3*	18	4*
Mono	Athiémé	16	7	17	9	17	15
	Comé	6	8	8	15	2*	7
	Grand-Popo	13	15	2*	16	3*	10
	Houéyogbé	25	1*	12	4*	13	5*
	Lokossa	10	2*	16	19	11	13
Ouémé	Adjarra	19	14	9	7	1*	6
	Akpro- Missérité	23	12	7	8	8	9
	Avrankou	14	4*	4*	2*	4*	1*
	Bonou	24	18	11	13	9	16
	Sème-Podji	2					
Plateau	Adja-Ouèrè	7	16	14	5*	7	11
	Ifangni	16	6	10	11	6	8
	Kétou	33	11	13	14	16	17
	Pobè	16	13	18	12	5*	14
	Sakété	30	17	19	17	14	19

Table 2 shows that four of the five best-scoring municipalities on the Bridging and Trust indexes, are also among the five best-scoring municipalities on the general Social Capital index. Three out of the five best scoring municipalities on the Responsibility index are also among the five best-scoring for Social Capital. Only the Low Conflict index does not tally well with the overall results. The municipality of Avrankou is among the five best in all four categories. Three out of five municipalities that score high on Social Capital are located in the Couffo.

3.4 Leadership

The questionnaire differentiates between three elements of leadership. The first is 'confidence in leadership'. Does the mayor keep his promises? For what type of investments will unexpected financial revenues be used? Do they benefit private or public goals? The combined answers to these questions form the "Confidence index". The second factor is perceived corruption. How are job opportunities treated? Who wins contracts? Does the tax system work? The answers to these questions form the "Corruption index". A third category concerns how the municipality is being managed. Does the mayor share responsibilities with others? Does the City Hall function when the mayor is away? The results are used for the "Shared Leadership index".

Table 3: Leadership index

Department	Municipality	Respon- dents	Confidence	Corruption	Shared leadership	Leadership
			Correlation with Leadership			
			0,6964912	0,7929825	0,5807018	
Couffo	Aplahoué	9	1*	2*	7	2*
	Djakotomé	20	13	18	17	18
	Dogbo	9	14	16	18	19
	Klouékanmé	10	17	17	2*	13
	Lalo	15	16	9	4*	10
Mono	Athiémé	16	8	4*	19	11
	Comé	6	5*	8	14	7
	Grand-Popo	13	9	3*	1*	3*
	Houéyogbé	25	18	12	11	16
	Lokossa	10	4*	6	15	6
Ouémé	Adjarra	19	6	11	6	5*
	Akpro-Missérité	23	19	10	10	15
	Avrankou	14	2*	14	12	8
	Bonou	24	15	7	9	12
	Sème-Podji	2				
Plateau	Adja-Ouèrè	7	3*	1*	5*	1*
	Ifangni	16	11	19	16	17
	Kétou	33	10	15	13	14
	Pobè	16	12	5*	3*	4*
	Sakété	30	7	13	8	9

In each region, at least one municipality scores well. The leadership index shows strong internal coherence. Four municipalities with a high score on overall leadership are among the five best-scoring in at least two categories. The municipality of Adja-Ouèrè scores best. The municipality of Adjarra, which cannot be found among the five best in any category, is rewarded for consistency with a fifth rank.

3.5 Participation

Four questions measure participation: 1) Is the municipality accountable to its population? 2) Do the respondents participate? 3) How do they participate? 4) How do they assess the level of participation in the elaboration and implementation of the development plan? The research investigated the opinions and knowledge of civil servants, council members and representatives of civil society organisations. The questions revealed to what level they knew about the participative process. The participation of these three groups is an important aspect of participation, but does not say much about popular participation. The questions referring to the village level are an indication for *popular* participation. Unfortunately the results of the questionnaire are not very conclusive on this aspect.

The answers to these four questions generate four indexes (see table 4), which together form the "Participation index". The results for "Respondent Participation" do not seem to correlate with the other three participation indexes. Apparently a respondent's participation in the elaboration or the implementation of the plan was arbitrary. The municipality of Ifagni, which was among the best-scoring in three categories, is last in respondent participation. The municipality of Athiémé scores consistently and is rewarded with a third place in the participation index. Four out of the five best scoring municipalities are from the Mono or the Couffo region.

Table 4: Participation index

Department	Municipality	Respondents	Accountability	General Participation	Respondent Participation	Appreciation Participation	Participation
			Correlation with Participation				
			0,6877193	0,6789474	-0,0263158	0,6736842	
Couffo	Aplahoué	9	17	15	4*	19	18
	Djakotomé	20	8	11	10	17	13
	Dogbo	9	12	18	3*	15	14
	Klouékanmé	10	3*	8	1*	16	5*
	Lalo	15	11	19	2*	10	11
Mono	Athiémé	16	6	6	9	6	3*
	Comé	6	19	2*	6	11	9
	Grand-Popo	13	18	9	12	18	19
	Houéyogbé	25	5*	7	5*	12	4*
	Lokossa	10	9	3*	7	1*	1*
Ouémé	Adjarra	19	4*	10	16	2*	6
	Akpro-Misséré-tété	23	14	4*	14	4*	8
	Avrankou	14	2*	13	17	13	12
	Bonou	24	15	14	15	9	16
	Sème-Podji	2					
Plateau	Adja-Ouèrè	7	16	16	8	14	17
	Ifangni	16	1*	1*	19	3*	2*
	Kétou	33	13	17	13	8	15
	Pobè	16	7	12	11	5*	7
	Sakété	30	10	5*	18	7	10

3.6 Ownership

Knowledge of the plan was measured through questions like: When was the plan adopted? Can you quote the vision of the plan? What are the total costs of the plan? What are the most important programmes in the plan? Who are the people responsible for its implementation? These questions combined constitute the “Knowledge index”. A second set of questions relates to respondents’ assessment of the plan’s content: the “Plan Assessment index”. Table 5 shows internal consistency. Two of the five best scoring municipalities on ownership scores high on both knowledge and appreciation. The municipality of Comé ranks first on the knowledge index,

a result that can be explained by a small number of well-informed respondents. Information sharing between respondents while answering the questionnaire may have influenced the results for the knowledge index in this and in other municipalities.

Table 5: Ownership index

Department	Municipality	Respon- dents	Plan Assessment	Knowledge	Ownership
			Correlation with Ownership		
			0,7596491	0,7824561	
Couffo	Aplahoué	9	11	6	9
	Djakotomé	20	6	16	12
	Dogbo	9	15	14	15
	Klouékanmé	10	13	4*	8
	Lalo	15	2*	15	10
Mono	Athiéomé	16	17	3*	11
	Comé	6	9	1*	4*
	Grand-Popo	13	18	12	16
	Houéyogbé	25	3*	11	5*
	Lokossa	10	12	18	17
Ouémé	Adjarra	19	8	8	6
	Akpro-Misséré-té	23	4*	5*	3*
	Avrankou	14	5*	2*	1*
	Bonou	24	7	9	7
	Sème-Podji	2			
Plateau	Adja-Ouèrè	7	19	19	19
	Ifangni	16	1*	7	2*
	Kétou	33	10	13	13
	Pobè	16	16	10	14
	Sakété	30	14	17	18

3.7 Comparing performance, social capital, leadership, participation and ownership

This study tries to test the hypothesis that municipalities that are better at implementing their plan will have more social capital, will show better leadership and participation and will have a greater sense of ownership.

The municipality of Adjarra, which ranks first in the Performance index, is 5 or 6 in the other indexes. The municipality of Avrankou, which is second-best on Performance, ranks first on Social Capital and Ownership, but only average on the three other indexes. In the combined index of Social Capital, Leadership, Participation and Ownership both municipalities occupy the first two places. All but three municipalities rank among the best five at least once in the different indexes. Houéyogbé, among the five best in three indicators, is among the last in Performance.

Table 6: Performance, Social Capital, Leadership, Participation, Ownership

Department	Municipality	Respondents	Ranking Performance	Ranking Quality	Social Capital	Leadership	Participation	Ownership	N° in Top 5
			1	(2-5)	2	3	4	5	(1-5)
Correlation with performance				0,2526316	0,1473684	-0,0824561	0,3105263	0,0385965	
Correlation with Participation			0,3105263	0,5754386	0,2421053	-0,2614035		0,3017544	
Couffo	Aplahoué	9	16	13	18	2	18	9	1
	Djakotomé	20	4	12	3	18	13	12	2
	Dogbo	9	13	19	12	19	14	15	-
	Klouékanmé	10	10	4	2	13	5	8	2
	Lalo	15	11	8	4	10	11	10	1
Mono	Athiémé	16	7	11	15	11	3	11	1
	Comé	6	14	3	7	7	9	4	1
	Grand-Popo	13	15	14	10	3	19	16	1
	Houéyogbé	25	17	6	5	16	4	5	3
	Lokossa	10	8	10	13	6	1	17	1
Ouémé	Adjarra	19	1	2	6	5	6	6	2
	Akpro-Missérété	23	9	7	9	15	8	3	1
	Avrankou	14	2	1	1	8	12	1	3
	Bonou	24	19	16	16	12	16	7	-
	Sème-Podji	2							
Plateau	Adja-Ouèrè	7	18	15	11	1	17	19	1
	Ifangni	16	12	5	8	17	2	2	2
	Kétou	33	3	18	17	14	15	13	1
	Pobè	16	5	9	14	4	7	14	2
	Sakété	30	6	17	19	9	10	18	-

■ = first five in column

Table 6 shows that there is a low correlation (0.25) between the Performance index and the combined index for Social Capital, Leadership, Participation and Ownership. The Participation index shows a low correlation of 0.31 with the Performance index. The Social Capital, Leadership and Ownership show no correlation with Performance. In other words, there is no proven statistical relationship of these three indicators with performance, at least not in the way these concepts have been measured in this research. Lastly, a correlation that could be expected was between Participation and Ownership but with 0.30 this also turned out low. The generally low level of participation, and the low level of awareness about how participation was organised, was surprising. Also the level of knowledge about the content of the plan was very low. This is surprising given that respondents were supposed to have been closely involved in the process of elaborating and implementing the plan. Figures about this can be found in the research report (Ahokpé et al. 2006).

4 Conclusion

Capacity development programmes in Africa operate on the assumption that strengthening the role of civil society; improving leadership skills; and by the promotion of participation and ownership, the performance of local government to get services to people and businesses will improve, with the aim to alleviate poverty in all its dimensions.

This study put forward the hypothesis that municipalities that are more successful at implementing their development plan, will have more social capital, better leadership, a higher degree of participation, and a stronger sense of ownership of the plan.

However, measuring performance proved difficult. Many municipalities turned out not to have information about the financial realisation of their plan. Information about the annual development plan for 2005 did exist in most cases, but could not be used without a thorough, case-by-case analysis - which is not done in this study. Yearly reports analysing the state of implementation of the year plan were unavailable in many municipalities - particularly information about the costs of the realisations. Hence a proxy for performance had to be

used. The figures available about the municipal budget for functioning costs are subject to the control of supervising central authorities and thus allow for comparisons between different municipalities. They include the municipal tax and non-tax revenues and state subsidies. The assumption is that 'good' policy will translate into improved municipal revenues over the years, and therefore it is used as an indicator for performance (through the "Revenue index"). This index is complemented by two other indexes. The assumption is that a municipality needs a clear structure for steering, coordination and monitoring its development plan, including the different actors that contribute to its implementation. This is captured by the "Process index". Also, a municipality should have data to show progress made in implementing the plan. This is captured by the "Transparency index". Together, these three indexes give an indication of the overall performance of the municipality, the "Performance index".

Three groups of informants were used in this research. They are involved in the municipal development either as (1) civil servants; or as (2) politicians; or as (3) active members of civil society. In the 20 municipalities included in this research, data was collected by means of questionnaires that were used to gather individual input, during group sessions. A total of 318 questionnaires were completed and included in the analysis. As for performance, indexes have been developed from proxy indicators for social capital, leadership, participation and ownership. The results show that there is a very low correlation of 0.25 between scores on the Performance index and those on the combined index for Social Capital, Leadership, Participation and Ownership. The Participation index is correlated with Performance but 0.31 is still very low. No other correlations could be found.

The findings of the research do not confirm the correlation between performance on the one hand and social capital, ownership, leadership and participation on the other.

There are a number of possible explanations. Maybe the timeframe of three months for this study was too short to tackle the highly complex reality it tries to understand. Also the quality of the municipal reports did not permit an easy comparison of performance. A third explanation could be the research method, using group

meetings and not personal interviews. And, of course, there remains the question of whether the proxies used really measure the research indicators.

All this may be true but the conclusion that there appears not to be any meaningful correlation between municipal performance and the other four indicators poses a serious problem for development practitioners. Capacity development services emphasise on participation to increase ownership. Leadership programmes intend to improve leaders' capacity to manage and guide the organisations and structures for which they are responsible. Efforts to support civil society attempt to improve trust and values in society and to reduce or prevent conflicts that retard development. To know whether all these capacity development efforts have a positive effect on the performance of (local) authorities, practitioners need positive research outcomes. Only then it might be expected that capacity development programmes will have an impact on municipal performance to improve the economy, the health and education, as well as the living conditions of its citizens. So far there is only belief in the impact of capacity development services but no evidence. Easterly, once an adherent of the World Bank structural adjustment and shock therapies, lost his faith in all big plans to end world poverty: "the only Big Answer is there is no Big Answer" (2006: 382 and 30). "The right plan is to have no plan" (2006: 5). This study did not prove him wrong.

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Annex: Tables

Table 1: Cases per municipality; group and sex

Department	Municipality	Group				Sex	
		Council	Administration (municipal-state)	Civil Society	Total	Male	Female
Couffo 5 out of 6 municipalities	Aplahoué	1	4	4	9	6	3
	Djakotomé	4	7	9	20	17	3
	Dogbo	1	6	2	9	8	1
	Klouékanmé	4	2	4	10	9	1
	Lalo	6	3	7	16	12	4
Mono 5 out of 6 municipalities	Athiémé	6	4	6	16	15	1
	Comé	2	2	2	6	6	0
	Grand-Popo	5	4	4	13	10	3
	Houéyogbé	5	9	11	25	21	4
	Lokossa	0	5	5	10	9	1
Ouémé 5 out of 9 municipalities	Adjarra	6	8	5	19	15	4
	Akpro-Misséréité	2	9	12	23	20	3
	Avrankou	5	7	2	14	12	2
	Bonou	3	16	5	24	22	1
	Sème-Podji	0	1	1	2	2	0
Plateau 5 out of 5 municipalities	Adja-Ouèrè	2	2	3	7	6	1
	Ifangni	8	3	5	16	15	1
	Kétou	7	22	4	33	26	7
	Pobè	5	7	4	16	14	2
	Sakété	4	3	23	30	23	6
Total		76	124	118	318	268	48

Table 2: Year plan activities and costs

Department	Municipality	Activities year 2005	Amount 2005	Activities budget municipality	Costs activities municipality	Activities (partly) realised	By the municipality	By others	Costs for the municipality	Costs for others
Couffo	Aplahoué	168	766 482 505	52	106 852 220	45	22	34	40 518 844	279 354 926
	Djakotomé	109	125 704 091	66	52 953 881	68	10	60	n.a.	n.a.
	Dogbo	80	386 107 506	21	48 280 000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Klouékanmé	86	227 080 000	68	53 316 000	76	66	22	53 106 000	n.a.
	Lalo	111	184 614 000	7	19 269 974	94	3	86	3 200 000	n.a.
Mono	Athiémé	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Comé	90	517 780 000	31	31 330 000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Grand-Popo	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	36	9	36	n.a.	n.a.
	Houéyogbé	67	333 159 934	11	22 858 708	52	n.a.	n.a.	22 858 708	207 675 302
	Lokossa	162	305 090 000	35	293 250 000	115	20	8	199 750 000	90 880 000
Ouémé	Adjarra	170	485 345 942	103	85 591 692	22	10	10	100 000 000	n.a.
	Akpro-Misséréité	83	583 680 000	57	154 213 673	73	41	29	203 106 806	102 818 710
	Avrankou	77	364 110 000	7	n.a.	10	n.a.	3	2 500 000	70 000 000
	Bonou	168	414 168 300	38	40 081 667	n.a.	36	n.a.	40 081 667	26 000 000
	Sème-Podji	68	376 983 500	16	99 250 000	15	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Plateau	Adja-Ouèrè	73	n.a.	46	44 270 356	n.a.	14	6	n.a.	90 000
	Ifangni	131	274 041 336	74	106 243 726	83	58	25	41 163 187	n.a.
	Kétou	94	1 004 568 000	45	34 663 200	n.a.	94	45	1 047 235 000	36 313 200
	Pobè	172	973 120 750	11	1 575 000	30	9	25	92 950 622	453 113 335
	Sakété	147	583 986 389	105	53 749 600	60	41	13	42 991 108	423 045 615

Table 3: Budget 2005 and financing the development plan

Departement	Municipality	Primary Budget 2005 functioning costs	Primary Budget 2005 Investments	Realized revenues 2005 Functioning costs	Realized Revenue Index 3/1	Realized Revenues Investments 2005	Budget 2005 reserved for Plan	Realized Budget 2005 for Plan	col.7/ col.6
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Couffo	Aplahoué	224 300 000	67 290 000	168 046 975	75%	.32 219 991	n.a.	n.a.	
	Djakotomé	131 500 000	39 450 000	98 843 032	75%	25 453 348	37 690 556	n.a.	
	Dogbo	163 384 820	117 722 620	130 236 254	80%	4 199 944	163 384 820	127 391 807	78%
	Klouékanmé	148 554 365	78 569 259	95 953 848	65%	3 651 717	2 000 000	n.a.	
Mono	Lalo	79 786 611	82 572 675	57 644 313	72%	3 200 000	26 111 000	51 500	0%
	Athiémé	52 522 983	16 019 510	58 383 088	111%	10 067 141	52 522 983	42 528 804	81%
	Comé	123 186 540	41 186 020	100 587 010	82%	14 008 888	n.a.	n.a.	
	Grand-Popo	119 150 125	68 491 025	93 825 055	79%	6 907 398	n.a.	n.a.	
	Houéyogbé	152 829 943	103 135 387	98 023 436	64%	15 045 660	n.a.	n.a.	
Ouémé	Lokossa	340 740 000	177 475 314	253 156 839	74%	23 535 817	355 601 648	259 835 638	73%
	Adjarra	206 000 000	127 000 000	236 000 000	115%	120 000 000	101 534 692	n.a.	
	Akpro-Misséréto	291 766 927	154 213 613	213 689 602	73%	93 888 934	n.a.	203 106 806	
	Avrankou	176 000 000	33 000 000	144 320 000	82%	56 000 000	14 000 000	12 000 000	86%
	Bonou	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	
Plateau	Sème-Podji	n.a.	376 983 500	n.a.		269 806 613	99 250 000	n.a.	
	Adja-Ouèrè	126 616 035	45 097 115	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	
	Ifangni	223 173 015	104 803 677	144 121 158	65%	41 163 187	274 041 336	41 163 187	15%
	Kétou	126 000 000	39 593 000	120 617 444	96%	13 486 998	10 130 230	9 342 450	92%
	Pobè	327 569 389	162 493 889	281 499 665	86%	27 055 290	n.a.	n.a.	
Sakété		182 975 000	94 777 260	112 784 214	62%	n.a.	110 617 458	42 991 108	39%

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