Juliette Alenda (Radboud University, Nijmegen)

“The glocal governance of sustainability in West Africa”

Abstract

This working paper is designed to present my research, my agenda, my specific focus points at large, to seek for possible collaborations, and to gather ideas.

Participation and empowerment are central in development discourses since the 1990s and the emergence of good governance impulse by the World Bank. In West Africa, from a legitimacy based on public governance, we arrived to a more important community governance, based on local hierarchies and the anteriority of certain populations. The management of natural resources is a source of tension between several categories of actors, some of whom are excluded from decision-making. To realize a development project on a specific population implies to understand the local power dynamics, the cultural diversity, the organization of the society, which is very hierarchical and gender centered. Even when promoting this understanding in the reports and discourses, too many development projects are still very ‘one-size fits all’, but it also comes from this lack of understanding of a very complex local governance. Public policies developed in African countries are part of international standards that are adapted to local contexts. But States retain some flexibility in the development of these policies. An approach in terms of governance allows to account for this flexibility through the identification of the initiatives taken by a plurality of actors (public, private, associative), of their modes of coordination and conflict resolution, of their power of action, and at different scales. From there, my principal question is: what could be the role of local non-State actors in the glocal governance of natural resources? And how and why people actually participate in non-State organizations?